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U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Folsom Field Office
63 Natoma St
Folsom, CA 95630

July 2004

The South Fork American River A Management Plan



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The **Bureau** *of Land Management*

Today

Our Vision

To enhance the quality of life for all citizens through the balanced stewardship of America's public lands and resources.

Our Mission

To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Our Values

To serve with honesty, integrity, accountability, respect, courage, and commitment to make a difference.

Our Priorities

To improve the health and productivity of the land to support the BLM multiple-use mission.

To cultivate community-based conservation, citizen-centered stewardship, and partnership through consultation, cooperation, and communication.

To respect, value, and support our employees, giving them resources and opportunities to succeed.

To pursue excellence in business practices, improve accountability to our stakeholders, and deliver better service to our customers.



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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Dear Friend:

This document is the final version of the South Fork American River Management Plan, which will guide management activities on public lands along the South Fork American River between Salmon Falls Bridge and Chile Bar Dam.

For the BLM, this management plan is different. It is different because we didn't use the standard Federal planning process. Instead, the South Fork Plan was developed using the community-based planning technique. In this process, local citizens were directly involved in formulating recommendations for management by using the consensus process to resolve issues. This was done in a long series of public meetings.

The individuals attending the planning meetings (self-selected – no one appointed them!) were a remarkably diverse group that represented a broad spectrum of interests, and had intimate knowledge of both the river corridor and the public lands issues. Reaching consensus on management issues was not easy, even with BLM facilitators present, but they managed to do so on most of the topics discussed. Everyone who participated in the planning process deserves credit for a job well done.

We believe this plan is better than we could have done by ourselves because of extraordinary level of public involvement.

Our deepest thanks go to all those who attended the meetings, or sent in their comments. The public lands along the South Fork American River will be far better managed because you cared enough to speak up.

The South Fork American River project is not done yet. Now that we all know what to do, we've got to do it. This will require a special effort, not only from the BLM, but also from all those who care about the river.

We will keep you posted on progress in plan implementation, and on opportunities to help make the plan a reality.

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INTRODUCTION

The South Fork American River is considered by many as one of the finest recreation resources in the state, within easy driving range of several major metropolitan centers.

The BLM long ago recognized the recreational values of the South Fork, and began acquiring private property along the river that would benefit the public. To date, approximately 1,633 acres have been acquired by the BLM from people who wanted to sell to the Government. These lands are in addition to the approximately 2,531 acres of the original public domain along the river that have never been in private ownership.

In 1996, El Dorado County initiated a planning process to update their 1984 South Fork American River Management Plan. At that time, the BLM made a decision to delay planning for the public lands within the river corridor until El Dorado County completed their plan. The BLM's intention was to wait, then produce a Federal plan that complemented the County plan. Since there is more private land, subject to County regulations, than Federal land along the South Fork.

In the mean time, other issues came up that required the BLM to begin planning for the public lands before El Dorado County's Final River Management Plan was finished. These issues included the status of the public lands under the General Mining Law, an often-stated public desire to take advantage of the recreational opportunities available on the acquired lands, and the BLM's own internal requirements for land use plans.

To produce a management plan for the public lands, the BLM decided to use the community-based, or collaborative, planning process. This relatively new technique directly involves the local community in the formulation of a draft plan.

Beginning in September, 2000, the BLM sponsored and facilitated a series of public meetings in the vicinity of the South Fork American to produce a plan. An outreach effort ensured people knew of the meetings and had the opportunity to participate. The meetings occurred twice a month, on the average, for a total of forty-eight meetings, with the last held in April, 2003.

Public attendance at the planning meetings varied from meeting to meeting. Nearly all the participants were local residents, but a few were from outside the immediate area that either owned property along the river, or had a special interest in the area. The participants in the planning process brought with them first-hand knowledge of the river corridor and its uses, and ideas of how the Bureau could best manage the river.

The basic strategy was to achieve consensus among meeting participants on the various issues; consensus being defined as 80% of the persons present. Consensus often means compromise, and compromise doesn't always come easily, and discussions were occasionally quite lively, but very productive. Even a casual observer could tell these people not only knew what they were talking about, but were inspired to directly assist the Bureau in formulating a river management plan.

This document was compiled from transcripts of those meetings, the draft plan, an Environmental Analysis (CA180-03-25), and public comments from the environmental review process. It reflects the values of local residents and river users, as well as the practical concerns of implementation. It is also consistent with laws and policies that reflect the views of the American people. Readers will note that this process did not develop a recommendation for status under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act for the South Fork – this topic will be analyzed at a later time as part of the Resource Management Plan (RMP) process for the Folsom Field Office.

This plan will guide the management of the public lands along the South Fork American River well into the future, allowing for public use and for protection of natural resources.

Plan Organization

The Management Plan is divided into three sections. The first is an overview of the entire river, with the intention of placing the Federal lands into perspective.

The second section consists of general management directions, and decisions that will be applied to more than one planning unit.

The third section, divided the public lands along the South Fork American River into seven distinct Planning Units to facilitate the planning process. Each planning unit is physically separated from other planning units by private property. The planning units are Miner's Cabin, Ponderosa Parcel, Parcel C, the Dave Moore Nature Area, Greenwood Creek, Norton Ravine, and Pine Hill.



Coloma, California, 1905
Used with permission of the California Geological Survey

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF PLANNING AREA – THE BIG PICTURE

This plan will only affect the Federal lands along the 21-mile stretch of the South Fork American River between Chili Bar and Salmon Falls Bridge in El Dorado County, California. It contains detailed information on how the Federal lands will be used, and how they will be developed.

The Federal lands, however, are a portion of a much larger resource, most of which is not in Federal ownership or under Federal control. To understand the reasoning behind the proposals for the Federal parcels, one must take a look at the entire resource.

Overview – Environmental Setting

The South Fork American River drains an 804-square mile watershed in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Elevations range from 490 feet above sea level at Folsom Lake to about 10,000 feet along the crest of the Sierra. Nearly all the watershed is located within the Eldorado National Forest.

The South Fork is located in the Western Metamorphic Belt of the Sierra Nevada physiographic province, which consists of steeply dipping metasedimentary and metavolcanic rocks of Paleozoic and Mesozoic age. The Planning Area itself is at lower elevations, mostly less than 2,000 feet above sea level, in the western Sierra Nevada foothills. This is a rugged area covered with grasses, oak, pine, and chaparral grading to oak and conifer forests bisected by deep canyons cut by the South Fork American River and other year-round streams.

The plant communities in the vicinity of the South Fork American have been classified as part of the Foothill Pine Belt, which in reality encompasses a wide variety of plant habitats (i.e., montane hardwood-conifer, blue oak-foothill pine, mixed chaparral, riverine, and riparian) supporting numerous animal species.

Overview – Cultural Resources (Prehistoric)

Prior to the Gold Rush, the lands along the South Fork were occupied by the Nisenan, or Southern Maidu people, a hunter-gatherer culture. In general, they were peaceful folks who often migrated to higher elevations during the summers, and traded with other tribes who lived in the Great Valley or by the coast. For the Nisenan, the Gold Rush of 1849 was a catastrophe, literally the end of the world as they knew it. Their population plummeted dramatically as Gold Rushers entered their lands. Many of the Nisenan occupation sites, villages or hunting camps, located close to water courses, were obliterated by placer mining activities, so only a few sites remained intact. Today, the most commonly seen artifacts are bedrock mortars, usually located near water and a source of acorns.

Overview – Cultural Resources (Historic)

As every California fourth-grader is taught, on January 24, 1848, James Marshall picked up a glittering pebble from the tailrace of a sawmill he was building for John Sutter in Coloma Valley along the South Fork American River. The sequence of events that stemmed from that simple act transformed California from a pastoral, sparsely-populated Mexican settlement to a bustling

American state practically overnight. Over the next several years, miners from every corner of the world swarmed all over the Sierra Foothills, digging up and washing river gravel in a frantic search for gold. By 1853, the easily obtainable placer gold was mostly gone, and interest was shifting to hard rock mines.



*Mining on the American River, 1852. Daguerreotype by George H. Jackson.
From the collection of Matthew R. Isenburg.
Used with permission of the California Geological Survey*

As the Forty-Niners either left California or went to work in one of the hard rock mines, others moved into the Mother Lode. Agriculture became more common, especially ranching and the growing of orchards. The timber industry became well-established, supplying the need for wood in the mines and other places. A number of the original mining camps prospered as established communities.

Water development on the South Fork began in the early 1850s as support for mining operations, and has continued ever since. Currently, the Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), the Sacramento Municipal Utilities District (SMUD), and the El Dorado Irrigation District (EID) operate a system of dams, reservoirs, ditches and canals on the South Fork for the production of hydroelectric power. The amount of water flowing through the project area during most of the year is regulated by releases from a series of upstream reservoirs operated by those companies.

Land use within the South Fork corridor is currently a mix of commercial, residential, industrial, agricultural, and recreational uses. Commercial rafting outfitters own or lease, and operate campgrounds, parking and staging areas along the river. Additionally, a number of other small businesses are located in the area, predominantly near the communities of Coloma and Lotus. Industrial land uses in the area include relatively small mining and rock quarrying operations, including sand and gravel, building stone, decomposed granite, and decorative rock.

Agricultural lands within the river corridor include scattered small farms and cattle grazing.

Private properties containing large family homes with river-front views commonly adjoin planning area parcels. Many residents living in this area enjoy the peaceful solitude associated with remote, low-density locations. The largest communities in the planning area vicinity, Coloma and Lotus, have experienced considerable growth associated with the recent population and economic boom. Ranching and farming have taken a back seat to automobile tourism and white water rafting, along with other river-based sports, which currently drive the area's economy.

Overview – Outdoor Recreation

Similar to most outdoor areas, the South Fork American and adjacent lands have provided opportunities for a wide variety of outdoor activities. These activities include water-related activities, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, gold panning, bicycling, and camping, among others. Opportunities for land-based recreation are somewhat limited because of the small size and scattered nature of the public lands – for instance, there is no long-distance recreational trail system because it would have to pass through private properties. Currently, the Dave Moore Nature Area offers a nature trail that is designed for handicapped persons along with a picnic area. Portions of the Pine Hill Planning Area in the vicinity of Weber Creek are used by off-road vehicle enthusiasts.

Prospecting – the recreational search for gold – has a special significance along the South Fork American because of the river's role in the California Gold Rush. Much of this activity takes place in the river itself, but several tributaries were also historically good sources of placer gold. These days, serious prospectors use suction dredges to gain access to the deeper portions of the river where early miners could not reach.

In more recent times, the South Fork American River has become one of the most heavily used rivers in America for white water rafting and kayaking. About 25 years ago, commercial white water rafting began to increase in popularity along the South Fork. It continued to increase until the mid-1990's when it peaked, then dropped off slightly.

The South Fork offers outstanding opportunities for white water recreation because of its proximity to major population centers and year-round flows. It has become one of the nation's most popular rivers for a number of reasons, including short shuttles between access points, several trip options, high spring flows, and dependable boating flows during the summer months when other rivers have dropped too low. These factors combine to create a recreational resource well suited to beginning and intermediate boaters. The South Fork offers a wide variety of experiences, from pastoral to highly social. Depending on time of day or day of week; the same runs provide a wide range of experience, in response to water release and flow patterns. This range of opportunities is only limited by the knowledge and flexibility of river users, and by public access.

From the viewpoint of a river recreationist, the South Fork can be roughly divided up into three distinct segments:

Upper

The stretch between Chili Bar and Coloma contains the narrowest and steepest section of the river area. Canyon sides rise almost from the river's edge to heights of some 600 to 800 feet within a horizontal distance of only four to six tenths of a mile; average slopes are greater than 35 percent. Rapids are numerous, and can be dangerous because of their length and the abrasive sedimentary and volcanic rock.

Middle

Beginning about one mile above Coloma, and continuing downstream to Clark Mountain, the canyon walls open up and the gradient subsides to between 10 and 15 percent. Alluvial terraces border the river most of the way to Clark Mountain. With the exception of a few rapids created by quartz-laden granite ledges, this stretch is relatively easy Class I and II rapids. The middle reach is quite popular with beginners in kayaks – they put-in near Coloma, and float to the BLM's Greenwood Creek parcel to take out before the river flows into the rougher rapids of the lower gorge. Much of the land along the middle stretch is privately-owned. In this area, several private campgrounds and access points provide a support network for river recreation.

Lower

Between Clark Mountain and Folsom Lake, the topography of the river corridor begins to resemble that of the first segment. It differs mainly in that the canyon is not as deep; canyon sides rise only 400 to 600 feet above the river; and slopes are not as steep, averaging between 20 and 25 percent. The bedrock underlying this stretch is by far the hardest of the river, comprised of mainly of chert, gabbro, and amphibolite. The rock has weathered to create "pool and drop" style rapids.



Dave Moore, medically retired from the BLM at age 35 with Multiple Sclerosis, was able to attend the dedication of the Nature Area named for him.

SECTION II

GENERAL MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

All plans make some assumptions about the overall planning environment. These are essentially conditions that planners take for granted or accept as true, work with, but have little or no power to change. These assumptions were developed in consultation with the South Fork Planning Group.

1. The population of El Dorado County and the surrounding area will continue to increase through the foreseeable future. Private lands along the South Fork American River will continue to be developed consistent with the County General Plan.
2. Because of its Gold Rush history, year round recreation opportunities and close proximity to major population centers, recreation demand in the South Fork American River Planning Area is high, and will probably increase in the foreseeable future.
3. The Federal Lands along the South Fork American River will remain in Federal ownership unless disposal meets the objectives of the plan.
4. With a strong appreciation and respect for private property, the Bureau of Land Management will continue to acquire land within the river corridor by purchase, donation, or exchange on a willing seller, willing buyer relationship with the purpose of promoting objectives of the vision statement.
5. Large amounts of property along the South Fork American River will remain privately-owned.
6. Newly acquired lands will not be opened to mineral entry or location under the General Mining laws for a period of 50 years, except in cases of national emergency.
7. The Public lands will continue to attract large numbers of users who desire mechanized or non-mechanized access to the river and to the public lands along the river.
8. The Bureau of Land Management will manage the BLM lands, recognizing that their activities will be affected by other management plans.
9. The natural environment along the South Fork American is not pristine wilderness. The river ecosystems have been impacted over the past 150 years by intensive gold mining, human settlement, hydropower development, sustained agriculture, and recreation use.
10. It is anticipated that there will be no significant changes in water flow in the South Fork American River in the foreseeable future.

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS

Planning constraints form the parameters, or limitations, in the scope of a plan. They clearly state what the plan will not cover, or define how something will or will not be accomplished. As with the Planning Assumptions, these were developed in an open forum in consultation with the South Fork Planning Group.

1. No plan alternative will be selected which results in significant adverse environmental impacts.
2. The acquired federal lands are currently withdrawn from mineral location and entry (not open to mining claims for 50 years). The original public domain lands, approximately, 2,531 acres of the larger planning area, are currently segregated (segregation is an action which closes the lands to the mining laws for a five year period). This land is withdrawn until February 9, 2007. This plan must determine whether these segregated lands will continue to be withdrawn or be reopened to mineral entry.
3. This plan must be consistent with federal laws, regulations, and policy, and, to the greatest degree possible, the applicable local and state laws.
4. All legal prior existing rights of mining claimants will be recognized.
5. Planning actions will be constrained to BLM managed lands within the boundaries of the South Fork American Planning Area.
6. Newly acquired lands will not be open to the mining law (subject to mining claims).
7. Planning actions and capital developments will be subject to financial constraints and availability of funds.
8. Planning decisions will be based on available data, with only limited crucial inventory work completed by BLM and volunteers to direct and perfect planning decisions.
9. This plan will provide management decisions needed to address problems associated with the shooting area on the Ponderosa Parcel.
10. Restrictions may be placed on public use to protect sensitive natural and cultural resources. Restrictions may also be imposed to protect private property and provide for public health and welfare.
11. No planning decisions will impact recreational navigability of the South Fork American River within the planning area.
12. During the planning process BLM will not issue any permits, leases or rights-of-way, within the planning area which would alter the character of the area or impede planning decisions. Annual Special Recreation Permits will continue to be issued as long as they do not impact or change the character of the area.

13. The BLM will not use condemnation as a management tool.

VISION STATEMENT

The vision statement contained in a plan such as this one is basically a description of the long-range goals of the management plan. The purpose of a good vision statement is to clearly define the purpose of the plan, and to describe what the planning area will be like 20 years from now.

“The public lands along the South Fork American River will continue to provide an enjoyable, educational experience for visitors, and to contribute to the quality of life in the local community. The South Fork American will be managed in a fashion that recognizes human needs through a partnership between the BLM, State Parks, El Dorado County, other agencies, landowners, businesses, the community, and recreational users.

Cultural resources, including both prehistoric and historic, will be protected and preserved. The different ecosystems found on the public lands will be protected and enhanced, and, where desirable and practical, restored to pre-Gold Rush conditions. Reasonable public access to the river and the public lands will accommodate a wide range of recreation uses, including, but not limited to boating, hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, bicycling, recreational gold-panning, and suction dredging, consistent with resource protection. The public lands will be managed in a way that respects and protects private property rights, and balances competing uses. Environmental education will be an important aspect of public land management. Where appropriate to implement this vision, the public lands may be supplemented by the acquisition of additional property.”

GENERAL MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES AND DECISIONS

The following management guidelines or policy statements will apply to two or more planning units that make up the South Fork American River Management Area. They reflect a mixture of conformance to Federal law and policy, and of recommendations from the South Fork Planning Group.

Relationship with Laws, Policy, and Other Planning Documents

Management of the public lands along the South Fork American River is currently guided by the Sierra Planning Area Management Framework Plan (MFP), as amended in 1988. Topics and issues not specifically addressed in the South Fork Plan will continue to be guided by the MFP until the MFP is superceded by a Resource Management Plan (RMP).

The BLM’s original intention was to amend the MFP to include South Fork American River planning decisions involving vehicle use, visual resource planning, and special area designation. Since this proposal, the Folsom Field Office has begun work on the RMP, which will ultimately replace the MFP. Planning decisions from the South Fork Plan will be incorporated into the RMP rather used to amend a land use plan that will be replaced in two to three years.

Special Area Designation

During the public planning process, participants unanimously recommended the South Fork of the American River for Special Management Area status. This is consistent with BLM regulations [43 CFR 8372.0-5 (g)] which authorize Special Management Area designation when it is determined that resources on the public lands require special management and control measures for their protection. The designation of the planning area as a “Special Management Area” identifies this area as requiring enhanced management attention, gives it a priority rating for funding, and enables BLM to conduct more regulated management activities.

The public lands of the South Fork contain extraordinary recreation values, and are part of a region that occupies a unique place in California history. Because of the South Fork’s proximity to a major metropolitan area, the need to manage for large numbers of recreationists, and fragile riparian and cultural areas, the BLM will initiate procedures for Special Management Area designation. This designation will also provide for specific recreation activities and experience opportunities that may require a high level of recreation funding or manpower investment. The designation will in itself have little or no affect on public use.

User Fees

Within Special Management Areas, the BLM can implement fee programs for certain uses. This will enable the BLM to more easily implement individual recreational use permit programs, and allow the BLM to apply for specific funds and grants to implement management actions and facility development. Income from fees will be used to maintain, enhance, and construct public facilities, and, if necessary, require certain conditions of use from the public.

All developed areas will require payment of a fee for the use of the facilities. A fee will also be charged for all use permits.

Lands

It is the policy of the BLM to retain the public lands in the vicinity of the South Fork American River in Federal ownership, unless specifically stated otherwise. All acquired public lands along the South Fork American River have been withdrawn from the General Mining Law of 1872 for 50 years, and the original public domain lands are closed to mineral entry until 2007. The BLM will initiate procedures to extend the mineral withdrawal for public domain lands for 50 years.

The BLM shall make a reasonable effort to acquire additional property where it is clear the acquisition will enhance the public benefits currently available on the public lands. Newly acquired lands within the general South Fork Planning Area will become part of the South Fork American Special Management Area and subject to management guidelines and planning decisions associated with the nearest, or most similar, Special Management Area parcel of public land, whichever is most appropriate. Specific management direction for newly acquired lands will be determined in the annual public meeting with the local community. Once title has been recorded over to BLM, the Folsom Field Office will initiate procedures to place a 50 year mineral withdrawal on the parcel.

Bio-Diversity

Biodiversity is defined as the full variety of life and its associated patterns and processes. It includes the variety of living organisms, the genetic differences between them, and the communities and ecosystems in which they occur. From a practical perspective, in general, the more diverse an ecosystem is the more stable it is. For the South Fork American, this means that a mosaic of all habitat types common to the area and typical of this elevation in the western Sierra Nevada will be encouraged and maintained. This will include a variety of plant communities in different stages of succession.

Riparian Communities

Riparian, or streamside, plant communities are ecologically very important. They are productive for wildlife, and help prevent erosion. All identified riparian communities will be protected to the greatest degree possible under the law to protect water quality and biological productivity. This will include perennial and intermittent streams as well as other wetlands. Riparian communities associated with artificial ponds on public lands will also be maintained.

Trails

In general, the BLM will construct trails in the different parcels to enhance recreational opportunities. Some of these will be multiple-use trails, designed for more than one type of non-motorized user. Trails, such as at the Dave Moore Nature Area, will be more restrictive. The BLM shall avoid building trails that may lead to trespass on private property.

The BLM will study the feasibility of a trail along the north side of the river between Chili Bar and Salmon Falls Bridge, and, if possible, work with the community to construct the trail.

Roads

The BLM will designate the public lands "Closed" to off-road vehicles, except at the access routes to designated parking areas. The Authorized Officer may allow use of off-road vehicles in closed areas for certain reasons, such as granting access to existing mining claims, administrative needs, or search and rescue situations.

Use of Firearms

All parcels will be closed to target shooting. The use of firearms for hunting is an allowable activity on all parcels except those where hunting is prohibited.

Hunting

The Miners Cabin, Greenwood Creek, and Norton Ravine, will remain open to hunting, and the Pine Hill Planning Unit has been recommended to stay open. The Ponderosa Planning Unit, Parcel C, and Dave Moore Nature Area are closed to all forms of hunting.

Threatened or Endangered Species

By law, all plants or animals identified as Threatened or Endangered by the Federal Government or as Rare or Endangered by the State of California will be given special preference for protection and management. Species which are candidates for listing by either the Federal or State governments will also be given special attention.

Timber Management, Sales and Harvest

A conventional timber harvest is extremely unlikely along the South Fork American River, except possibly as a part of a fuel reduction project. No standing tree, dead or alive, may be cut down without the approval of the BLM. Sale of timber is basically an auction, conducted by sealed bid, with the high bidder getting the timber. The opportunity to submit a bid must be equally available to all. Bidding will begin at the appraised fair market value of the timber to be sold.

Noxious Weed Control

It is the policy of the BLM to eradicate populations of noxious weeds. Each parcel along the South Fork American River shall have a Noxious Weed Control Plan to expedite this policy. The principle weeds along the South Fork include scotch broom and star thistle.

Fuels Management

The BLM will actively manage the buildup of fuels with intent of protecting the public lands, private homes, property, and natural resources. The BLM shall prepare a fuels management plan for each planning unit except for the Ponderosa Parcel. The purpose of these plans shall be to reduce the potential for wildfire.

Grazing

No new grazing leases will be issued. Grazing will continue within the Dave Moore Planning Unit. Grazing may be used as a management tool to control invasive weeds, or to assist in the fuel reduction management program.

Gold-Seeking, Mining Claims and Mineral Development

Mining for gold has a long history along the South Fork American. The Great California Gold Rush began here with the discovery of placer gold in river deposits in January, 1848. In just a few years, thousands of miners removed huge quantities of gold from the river and its tributaries, leaving behind only enough to tantalize a hobbyist or historical buff.

Over the years, many people have complained to the BLM about the use of the term "mining" when it is applied to casual prospectors on a recreational outing. To these individuals, mining is a serious economic activity by which people earn their living, not a hobby. Their point is well-taken. Unfortunately, the General Mining Law of 1872 makes no distinction between the two different levels of gold extraction. This problem with terminology can lead to some confusion

when planning for the public lands.

All acquired public lands along the South Fork American River are withdrawn from the General Mining Law of 1872 for 50 years, and the original public domain lands are presently closed to mineral entry until 2007. The BLM will initiate procedures to extend the mineral withdrawal for public domain lands for 50 years. This means these lands are not open to the filing of mining claims although pre-existing claims are still valid. This is important to recreationists because the holder of a mining claim has the exclusive legal right to all the locatable minerals on that claim. The general public can casually look for gold on unclaimed federal lands along the South Fork, but must get the permission of the claimholder before prospecting on an existing claim. The mining claimant, however, does not have the right to restrict public use of the claim for uses that have nothing to do with mining.

Recreational gold-seekers can use non-mechanized equipment such as shovels, pans, and sluice boxes on the South Fork. Sluice boxes, however, must be less than six feet in length.

Recreational prospectors are also allowed the use of suction dredges to look for gold. In addition to the required California Department of Fish and Game permit, gold dredge users must obtain a Special Recreation Use Permit from the BLM to use their dredges on the South Fork where there are no mining claims. These permits will be issued on a first come; first served basis. There must be at least 300 feet between dredges, unless the permit holders themselves agree to work closer. All dredges must have a four-stroke engine. Mufflers with spark arresters will be required on dredges to reduce noise. Noise will be monitored to determine disruptive noise levels. No gas container larger than 2 ½ gallons will be allowed within 25 feet of the water. Active dredging will occur only between the hours of seven am and five pm (unless otherwise stipulated) from the last weekend in May through October 15. Dredging will not be allowed within a 300-foot radius of occupied private residences along the river, or from BLM facilities such as restrooms or lunch sites. Special considerations will be made in cases where the dredger can provide written permission from the property owner and resident occupant. Unless land on both sides of the river is public land, dredge users must stay within 25 feet of the public land shoreline or property line to avoid trespass.

Day-Use dredging with dredge nozzles three inches or less in size is allowed in the Miners Cabin and Norton Ravine Planning Units. The Pine Hill Planning Unit was also recommended to allow for day-use dredging opportunities. Day-use operators must register daily and drop off their registration form in a box provided at key access points along the river. No day-use dredging is allowed at Maya Beach in the Miners Cabin Planning Unit, Ponderosa Planning Unit, Parcel C, Dave Moore Nature Area, and Greenwood Creek Planning Unit. Along with the three-inches-or-less requirement, day-use operators will be guided by special stipulations developed by the agency to reduce resource impacts. Permit holders will have preference over day-use operators. No equipment can be left over night by Day-Use operators.

Casual use gold hounding with hands and pans, and sluicing will be allowed in the Miners Cabin Planning Unit, Parcel C Planning Unit, Dave Moore Nature Area, and Norton Ravine Planning Units. Sluice boxes will not exceed six feet in length. No permits are required for this activity. Within the Greenwood Creek Planning Unit, hands and pans will be allowed including Hastings Creek, below the mining claimant's boundary. Sluicing will not be allowed within the

Greenwood Creek Planning Unit. Greenwood Creek itself will be off limits to casual use gold panning, and sluicing.

Dredge operators with valid permits who do not comply with the stipulations and conditions contained in their permit will have their permits terminated.

All mining claim operators must comply with Federal regulations 43 CFR 3715 and 3809, and with state and local laws and regulations.

The BLM will use the adaptive management process to address conflicts between gold-seekers, other river users, and private property owners.

Commercial Uses of the Public Lands

The public lands throughout the planning area are available for commercial uses, including activities where a fee is charged for participation, or when natural materials are gathered for sale, however, a Special Recreation Use Permit must be obtained from the BLM. These uses could include commercial gathering of natural materials (such as mushrooms), fund-raising events, guided whitewater rafting tours, or commercial filming or photography. All commercial uses shall be consistent with the Vision Statement, and with the goals and decisions of each planning unit.

Permitted Commercial operators who do not comply with the stipulations and conditions contained in their permit will have their permit revoked.

Noise Levels

Noise from recreational users on the South Fork American is a controversial issue among local residents. The primary subjects of complaints are gold dredgers with loud engines, and exuberant whitewater rafters. The BLM shall adopt noise level standard proposed in El Dorado County's Draft General Plan, as their own, and enforce them on the federal lands covered by this plan. If these levels do not meet planning objectives, or are too restrictive, they will be modified.

Visual Resource Management

BLM will implement a management goal of maintaining and restoring all lands within the planning area to a VRM Class II rating except for the Ponderosa Planning Unit and the south section of the Greenwood Creek Planning Unit, Clark Mountain, which will be managed for a VRM I rating even though it is a small geographic area. Although the Ponderosa Planning Unit meets the Class IV rating criteria, BLM will take future management actions to retain and improve the scenic quality of this area, regardless of its VRM rating.

Rights of Way

Requests for the granting of a right-of-way over Federal land for various purposes, including access roads, power lines, water lines, or telephone lines, will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and evaluated for conformity to management goals and objectives. Applications for a

right-of-way must be made to the BLM.

This is the Federal equivalent of an easement under state law. Unlike easements, which are attached to a deed, rights-of-way are assigned to an individual for a specified time period, usually 30 years. There is an annual fee, based on the amount of land contained in the right-of-way. A right-of-way can be transferred to another person, should the holder sell their property. A right-of-way will not normally be approved unless it is consistent with the overall Vision Statement for the South Fork American Planning Area, the Goals Statement for the individual planning unit, and the appropriate Visual Resources Management class.

Cultural Resources

History comes alive along the South Fork American River. The heritage of the California Gold Rush is a powerful force in the area to this day. Relics of those times are commonplace, and a number of people carry on in the traditions of the "Days of Forty-Nine." On the public lands, protection of cultural resources is required by law. All artifacts will remain in place unless removed as part of an authorized archaeological investigation. Where practical, cultural sites will be interpreted for public use and enjoyment, with an emphasis on interpreting sites associated with the Gold Rush of 1849.

Camping

Camping on public lands is only allowed on a permitted basis. Each planning unit has special requirements on camping. In Parcel C, Greenwood Creek, and Norton Ravine Planning Units, campers must fill out a Special Use Permit and drop it off in a registration box provided at the designated site, or camping zone. Fees will be assessed for camping on public lands.

Persons wishing to camp in the Miners Cabin Planning Unit or Dave Moore Nature Area will be required to obtain a Special Recreation Use Permit at the Folsom Field Office. Camping will only be allowed in designated camping sites, zones, or approved dispersed sites.

No camping is allowed in the Ponderosa Planning Unit.

Campfires

Campfires are allowed only in BLM- provided fire-rings located within designated campsites, or in camping zones in the Parcel C, and Greenwood Creek Planning Units. In the Miners Cabin and Dave Moore Nature Area Planning Units, and in dispersed camping areas in all other planning units, no camp fires are allowed unless authorized by BLM and are confined in an approved fire pan.

Permits

As stated throughout this plan, BLM permits are required for a variety of activities, including camping, use of gold dredges, and all commercial and organized group activities. These permits will contain special stipulations and conditions of use. The principle of Adaptive Management will be applied in the permit-issuing process to minimize any adverse impacts stemming from the

activity.

Signs

BLM will construct information signs, camping permit drop boxes, and day use registration boxes at appropriate areas.

Visitor Capacity

Visitor, or Carrying Capacity, is defined as the number and type of visitors that can be accommodated in an area with no unacceptable impacts on the quality of either environmental resources and/or recreational opportunities. Easily-measured threshold levels for various impacts will be established that will indicate if a site is beginning to exceed its prescribed visitor capacity. This will give managers an opportunity to resolve problems before they become serious.

Visitor Capacity thresholds will be established where needed based on the results of the monitoring program.

Adaptive Management

The BLM will follow the principles of Adaptive Management on the public lands of the South Fork American River. Basically, this means that if a management problem arises, the BLM will first propose the least restrictive solution to resolve the problem. If that doesn't work, then a more restrictive action will be taken. Essentially, the BLM will progress from the least restrictive solution to a problem to the more restrictive until the problem is resolved.

Monitoring

An active program of monitoring conditions will be instituted. The information from the monitoring program will be compared to baseline data to identify trends, and to evaluate progress in achieving management goals and objectives. For effectiveness, the monitoring objectives must be closely tied to management objectives. Monitoring methodology must be simple and consistent.

Federal or state listed rare, threatened, or endangered species will be given special attention, and a list of the species that are likely to occur along the river in the Planning Area will be prepared.

1. The BLM shall develop and implement a monitoring system to continuously evaluate the following indicators:

- Number of unauthorized trails developed
- Photographs from established photo points for signs of erosion, soil compaction, or significant vegetation loss
- Site observations on current use and behavior
- Evidence of trash, human waste
- Illegal dumping

- The waiting time to use toilets
- Number of vehicles
- Numbers of people using the area at one time
- User displacement
- Complaints
- Vandalism
- Crowded conditions
- Noise
- Public safety

2. Docents and volunteers will be part of the monitoring program.

3. The Monitoring Program will be evaluated for effectiveness on a continuing basis.

Cooperative Management

The relationship between the BLM and the following agencies and individuals should be explored. Where mutual objectives exist, a cooperative management agreement should be negotiated and implemented.

US Bureau of Reclamation
 US Fish and Wildlife Service
 California Department of Parks and Recreation
 California Department of Fish and Game
 California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection
 California Department of Boating and Waterways
 El Dorado County
 Local law enforcement
 American River Conservancy
 Private property owners
 Commercial owners & outfitters
 Clubs and organizations
 Volunteers /Docents

Relationship Between the BLM and the Local Community

The BLM shall prepare an annual report to be presented to the local community at a public meeting. At that meeting, the public will be given ample opportunity to raise issues related to this plan.

The need for Plan Amendments will be discussed at these annual meetings. Any member of the public, organization, or the BLM may propose a Plan Amendment. Specific management plans for newly acquired lands will be developed using the collaborative process.

Plan Amendments

To be effective, a plan must have some flexibility built into it, since even the best of plans sometimes have unforeseen consequences which might be undesirable. On the other hand, plans that are easy to change have no stability--one of the main reasons for having a plan in the first place.

The South Fork American River Management Plan can be modified, however, if a good case can be made for the change. For example, if the monitoring program or an independent research project produces information that would justify a change, then a plan amendment should be prepared.

Plan amendments will be treated formally. The BLM will prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA), and submit both the proposed amendment and the EA for public review. A plan amendment will not be finalized until the public review process has been completed.

Occasionally, small changes in the plan may be made administratively. These would be directly related to the policy of using the Adaptive Management strategy to resolve problems.

SECTION III

INDIVIDUAL PLANNING UNITS

Each planning unit has its own unique characteristics, mix of physical and biological resources, and recreational uses. Because of this, each unit was closely examined by the South Fork Planning Group, and management prescriptions tailored for the planning unit. Each has a Goals Statement – a declaration of how the planning unit will be managed.

MINER’S CABIN PLANNING UNIT

Description of the Area

Just downstream of the Chili Bar Dam, the South Fork winds its way through a very steep canyon into the Miner’s Cabin Planning Unit. Named after a Gold Rush-era cabin site, the public lands in this area total 1,043 acres, 392 of which are part of the original public domain. Three parcels of land, totaling 651 acres, were acquired by the BLM to support significant botanical and wildlife diversity, as well as education and recreational opportunities. This area is rich in mining history and cultural sites, but it is probably best known today for two Class III rapids: Meatgrinder and Triple Threat.

On the south side of the river, several heavily-wooded side drainages flow into the South Fork. This biologically-diverse corridor provides critical habitat for many wildlife species. The South Fork American, and its many small tributaries, and healthy riparian zone, support rainbow and brown trout, a variety of native fish, and native amphibians.

North-facing slopes in the Miner’s Cabin Planning Unit are dominated by canyon live oak and black oak on steeper wetter areas, with interior live oak and blue oak in drier areas. Other plants include California buckeye, flowering ash, deer brush, birch-leaf, mountain mahogany, coyote brush, and California coffeeberry. Chaparral, live oak woodland, and grassland occur on south-facing slopes in the river canyon. The riparian area of the South Fork American River is dominated by white alder and arroyo willow.

Present Management Situation

The dominant use is recreation; activities such as fishing, swimming, gold panning and dredging, hiking, and whitewater boating are the most common. Access by means other than boat is difficult, giving the area a primitive backcountry feel. Presently, there are no major use conflicts. The acquired lands are withdrawn from the Mining Law of 1872, and the public domain lands are segregated. There are no existing mining claims.

Commercial raft companies, organized groups, and private individuals use the BLM land at the Miner’s Cabin site for lunch and rest stops. In 1995, BLM installed a composting restroom

facility at Miner's Cabin to accommodate recreation use on the upper river. The public has expressed a desire to increase access opportunities other than by the river.

The BLM has identified the Miner's Cabin site itself as a place that can accommodate a large number of users – up to 200 at any one time, thus taking pressure off other parcels. The community supports current use patterns, but the BLM must continue to monitor this site to protect it from overuse.

The 131-acre Wilkinson parcel, acquired by the BLM in 2000, carried the restriction that future use and management of the property shall be that the property remain in an undivided and undeveloped state for wildlife, recreational and educational purposes.



*Miner's Cabin Parcel, looking downstream toward Maya Rapids
Photo by BLM*

Goals Statement

The highly scenic Miner's Cabin Planning Unit contains very steep hillsides and highly flammable vegetation with poor public access. Because of these conditions, management priority will be to protect the essential character of the area. The natural beauty of the parcel will be maintained primarily by encouraging low impact, non-intrusive recreational activities in a day use setting. Commercial uses, camping, and other organized group uses will be allowed only with a BLM permit. Cultural sites will be protected, and where practical, interpreted for public use and enjoyment with an emphasis on sites associated with the Gold Rush of 1849. Areas where high visitor use occurs will be managed to protect the physical, social, and environmental resources. The BLM will seek to acquire land to improve public access should the opportunity arise. The Miner's Cabin Planning Unit will be managed as Visual Resources Management Class II.

Management Actions

General:

1. The Miner's Cabin Planning Unit shall be primarily a day-use area, unless an overnight camping permit is obtained from the BLM.
2. The current withdrawal from the Mining Law of 1872 will be continued on public domain land.
3. The Miner's Cabin Planning Unit will be managed for a VRM Class II.
4. The Maya Rapids beach on the north side of the river is for day-use only. There will be no camping or gold dredging at this location.
5. The Miner's Cabin Planning Unit is closed to livestock grazing.
6. The BLM will seek to acquire land to improve public access should the opportunity arise.

Access – Roads:

1. The Wilkinson Road, from Highway 49 to the river, shall be maintained for vehicle use by agency or emergency vehicles on official business only. Public use of Wilkinson Road shall be by non-motorized means.
2. The entire area is closed to the use of off-road vehicles.

Access – Trails:

1. The BLM shall investigate the possibility of constructing a trail along both sides of the river beginning at Chili Bar and going downstream to the public lands.
2. The BLM will investigate the possibility of constructing a ridge-top trail to the river from the Stewart Mine Road and/or Highway 193.
3. If feasible, the BLM shall build a hiking trail on the Coloma/Lotus Ditch.
4. The BLM will avoid building trails that may lead to trespass on private property.

Camping:

1. Overnight camping will be by BLM permit only in one of six specified sites. The specified camping site furthest upstream will be available for general use, but not for long-term gold dredgers or boaters. Fees will be assessed for camping.

2. No open campfires or cooking fires will be allowed during fire season, generally from Memorial Day through October 31.
3. Overnight permittees must have self-contained sanitary equipment.
4. Campsites will be hidden from the river if possible.

Facilities:

1. The BLM shall provide trailhead parking on the south side of the river at Chili Bar (if possible), and in the Red Shack area where Wilkinson Road intersects Highway 49.
2. The BLM shall provide sanitary facilities along the river for both trail users and overnight users in a strategic location out of the flood plain, if possible. Sanitary facilities will also be placed in the Red Shack parking area.
3. The BLM shall construct/improve a trail from Highway 49 in the vicinity of the Red Shack, down the Wilkinson Road to the river.

Gold Seeking and Gold Dredge Use:

1. The Miner's Cabin Planning Unit will continue to be withdrawn from mineral entry. Recreational prospecting, including dredging with certain restrictions, is a legitimate activity in the Miner's Cabin Planning Unit.
2. A maximum of three dredges with intake nozzles three inches in diameter or larger on a two-week permit will be allowed at any one time. A dredging permit must be obtained from the BLM.
3. One of the dredges may have an intake nozzle up to eight inches in diameter. The length of stay for the eight-inch dredge will be 28 days, which may be extended for an additional 28 days if there is no demand for the site, and if the site has been inspected for permit compliance by the BLM. Eight-inch dredges will be restricted to areas where water is at least 10 feet deep.
4. The other two dredges will have intake nozzles less than eight inches in diameter. The length of stay will be fourteen days, with a possible extension of an additional fourteen days if there is no demand for the site, and if the site has been inspected for permit compliance.
5. Backpack gold dredges with an intake nozzle three inches in diameter or less may be used on a casual, day-use basis if the operator registers at a BLM-established check-in point.

Ponderosa Planning Unit

Description of the Area

The 10-acre Ponderosa Parcel is off the river, and is bisected by Marshall Grade Road. The east half is part of a Recreation and Public Purpose Act lease for a privately-run campground. The west half was used by the California Department of Parks and Recreation under a free use permit to remove decomposed granite for trail construction purposes.

Present Management Situation

The parcel has been the site of an unauthorized target shooting area, which, over the years, had become a problem area. This area was closed to shooting on September 1, 2000.

Goals Statement

The Ponderosa Parcel shall be retained by the Federal Government for open space and other community purposes. The shooting ban shall be made permanent and the quarry closed. Erosion will be controlled, and damaged areas shall be reclaimed and rehabilitated to bring the parcel from a VRM Class III to a VRM Class II. The lease for Ponderosa Park campground will be continued until the lease expires. Two years before the lease is up, in 2006, the BLM will conduct a community planning session to determine the future of the lease area. The mineral withdrawal will be continued.

Management Actions

General

1. Public use of the parcel shall be limited until the restoration effort shows results.
2. The parcel shall be kept fenced to discourage casual public use until the restoration effort shows results.
3. The parcel shall be closed to the use of off-road vehicles.
4. The parcel shall be closed to all firearms use. There will be no hunting with any type of weapon.
5. The parcel shall be closed to grazing leases.
6. The quarry shall be closed.
7. The BLM shall continue to issue special use permits, provided that they are consistent with the vision statement, management goals, and VRM Class III guidelines.

Camping

1. When reopened for public use, the parcel shall be day-use only, with no camping.

Vegetation Management

1. The BLM shall prepare and implement a plan to restore native vegetation and control erosion.

Recreational Gold Seeking

1. Continue the mineral withdrawal.

Parcel C

Description of the Area

Parcel C is approximately 10 acres of public domain land. It consists of mostly river gravels with some riparian vegetation. Local access is by river only, and because of this, the parcel gets public use through commercial permits.

Present Management Situation

Parcel C is used by several commercial raft companies, under a permit, as a lunch and overnight stop.

Goals Statement

Parcel C shall be retained for public use. The BLM shall attempt to obtain an easement for public access from adjacent property owners, but only if they are willing. Panning and sluicing for gold will be allowed, but not dredges. Parcel C will continue to be managed for overnight camping. The BLM will manage for VRM Class II. Continue the existing system for issuing recreation use permits.

Management Actions:

General

1. The BLM shall keep current fire restrictions, as stipulated in special use permits, in place.
2. The BLM shall work with interested parties on the evaluation of commercial tent sites.

3. The parcel shall be closed to hunting.
4. The BLM shall attempt to obtain an easement for public access.
5. The BLM will issue no more than three Special Recreation Use Permits at any one time.
6. The BLM will issue no more than one organized group (up to 25 people) permit at a time.

Camping

1. Camping shall be by permit only, with permits issued on a first come-first served basis.
2. All campfires shall be in fire pans or designated fire rings only.

Vegetation Management

1. The parcel shall be closed to grazing leases.

Recreational Gold Seeking

1. Continue the mineral withdrawal.
2. Panning and sluicing are allowed, but no suction dredges.

Dave Moore Nature Area

Description of the Area:

The Dave Moore Nature Area consists of 126 acres of public domain land adjacent to Highway 49 and the South Fork American River. The terrain is fairly flat, with piles of gravel and cobbles scattered throughout the parcel. A riparian forest of white alder, black cottonwood, willow, and big leaf maple is found in the Dave Moore Nature Area, along the shores of the South Fork American River. Away from the immediate river course and its benches is an interior live oak woodland with blue, black, and valley oak along with foothill and ponderosa pines. Patches of chaparral are interspersed throughout the in this oak woodland. Two 10-acre parcels, considered part of this unit, are isolated from the primary parcel; neither has public access.

Vegetation is recovering from past disturbances, and consists of oaks, scattered pines, brush, and riparian species. Access to the parcel from Highway 49 is a gravel road that leads to the parking area. There is a restroom facility at the trailhead. A trail designed for people of all physical abilities runs from the parking lot to the river, and back. The flood of January, 1997 destroyed

much of the trail closest to the river. The Dave Moore Nature Area is a popular spot for school groups and families, especially in the spring when wildflowers are at their peak.



*Mushroom Rock – A landmark along the trail
to the river at the Dave Moore Nature Area
Photo by BLM*

Present Management Situation

The Bureau of Land Management recognizes the potential for the Dave Moore Nature Area as a great asset to the local community and to the physically challenged. The existing trail was developed with the help of many agencies and volunteers. Many school groups use Dave Moore for educational and interpretive purposes. Environmental Traveling Companion (ETC), a nonprofit group dedicated to introducing the physically challenged to the natural world, is an adjacent property owner, and their clients continue to use the area for recreational and spiritual activities. Many local residents use the trail for exercise and river access. The two isolated 10-acre parcels and the portion of the Dave Moore parcel north of Highway 49 are presently under a grazing permit. The portion of the Dave Moore parcel north of Highway 49 also contains a portion of a landing strip.

Goals Statement

The Dave Moore Nature Area, except for the two isolated ten-acre parcels, will be retained in its entirety by the Federal Government. It will be primarily a day-use area with the primary function of providing an interpretive experience to the public. The long-term management goal is to develop a loop trail to the river that is a barrier-free nature trail for use by schools, the physically-challenged, and the general public. The Area will be open for use year-round. The BLM will continue the practice of requiring special recreation use permits for camping. Recreation activities will be restricted to those compatible with the enjoyment of nature, including hiking, jogging, picnicking, bird watching, fishing, and other low-impact uses.

Intrusive activities such as ORV use, mountain biking, horse riding, hunting, general firearms use, and other conflicting activities will not be allowed. The mineral withdrawal will be maintained. Potential fuels will be managed to reduce the potential for wildfire while maintaining wildlife habitat. The area will be managed as VRM Class II.

Management Actions

General

1. The area will be managed, primarily, as a day-use area, open all year-around.
2. The BLM shall provide interpretation of parcel resources.
3. Open fires will be allowed by special BLM permits on a case-by-case basis.
4. The amphitheater, used by educational groups, will be relocated and rebuilt in the new location.
5. The BLM shall strive to acquire the parcel next to ETC from a willing seller.
6. The BLM shall make the two isolated 10-acre parcels available for disposal.
7. The area will be closed to incompatible activities including ORV use, mountain biking, horse riding, hunting, and general firearms use.
8. Manage as VRM Class II.
9. Special Recreation Use Permits shall be issued on a case-by-case basis.

Access – Roads

1. A hard surface will be provided for parking.
2. The parking lot shall have no more than 65 spaces.

Access – Trails

1. The BLM shall complete the Dave Moore Trail into an accessible, barrier-free loop.
2. Use of the Dave Moore Trail shall be limited to foot and wheelchair traffic. Mountain bikes and equestrian use will not be authorized.
3. The BLM shall harden the Dave Moore Trail surface for better year-round accessibility.

4. The BLM shall work with interested adjacent property owners on proposals to link trail systems.

Camping

1. Overnight use will be by education groups only through a Special Recreation Use permit.

Vegetation Management

1. Grazing will be allowed only in the portion of the Dave Moore Nature Area north of Highway 49.
2. In the rest of the Dave Moore Nature Area, south of Highway 49, grazing will be allowed only for specific purposes, such as noxious weed control or fuel reduction. No additional grazing permits will be issued.
3. Fuels will be managed to reduce the wildfire hazard while maintaining wildlife habitat.

Facilities

1. The BLM shall study the feasibility of providing a toilet and portable boardwalk at the beach area for use by disabled visitors.

Gold Seeking and Dredger Use

1. Maintain the current mineral withdrawal.
2. Gold seekers may use only "hands and pans," to look for gold. Mechanized equipment is prohibited.

Greenwood Creek Planning Unit

Description of the Area

The Greenwood Creek Planning Unit consists of both public domain and acquired lands with a total of approximately 732 acres. The Planning Unit is bisected by the South Fork American River. The northern portion, mostly acquired lands known as the Straza parcel, lies between Highway 49, and the river. The southern portion has no legal access other than the river. The Straza parcel encompasses segments of perennial Greenwood and Hastings Creeks. Both creeks are gold-bearing streams, heavily mined in the earliest days of the Gold Rush. The Planning Unit contains significant biological and cultural resources. Existing roads and trails connect the river with Highway 49 and the east side of Hastings Creek. These roads are closed to motorized vehicles.



*Whitewater rafters preparing to launch from the beach area near the restroom,
Greenwood Creek Planning Area
Photo by BLM*

Present Management Situation

The Greenwood Creek Planning Unit is located downstream from Henningsen-Lotus Park. This parcel receives more use than any other BLM parcel located on the river. Because of its location, large sandy beaches with shade and a composting toilet, numerous private, commercial, and organized boating groups, choose this site for lunch stops and rest stops.

The Greenwood Creek area is also popular for non-boating activities such as hiking, swimming, fishing, picnicking, and overnight camping. There are several mining claims, but they do not cover the entire planning area.

Goals Statement

Management priority in the Greenwood Creek Planning Unit will be to protect the natural and cultural values of the entire planning unit while providing opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation. Cultural sites will be protected, and, where possible and desirable, interpreted to the public. Areas where high visitor use occurs will be managed to protect the physical, social, and environmental resources, as well as provide for public safety. Care will be taken to protect riparian areas and aquatic habitat. It is a high priority to provide an access road, parking lot, and toilet facility on public land near Greenwood Creek, consistent with the protection of natural and cultural values. Uses that require a permit, including suction dredging, will be regulated to enhance the overall recreation experience. Multiple use recreation developments may be provided as appropriate, consistent with the goal of protection of natural and cultural values, and with the overall Vision Statement. The Planning Unit will be withdrawn from mineral entry. The portion of the planning unit south of the river (Clark Mountain) shall remain undeveloped until such time as a clear need for facilities is demonstrated.

Management Actions

General

1. The Greenwood Creek Planning Unit shall be primarily managed as a day-use area, with overnight use by permit only.
2. Public land south of the river (Clark Mountain) will be classified as VRM Class I.
3. Public land west of Hastings Creek will be classified as VRM Class II.
4. Hunting will continue on the public lands unless, at some future date, there is a reason to curtail it.
5. Applications for rights-of-way will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and will be approved only if consistent with the vision statement and goals statement.

Access – Roads and Facilities

1. The Greenwood Creek access will include a parking area on and adjacent to the old Highway 49 road. It will have approximately 40 parking spaces for passenger vehicles only, with a barrier to prevent ORV use. There will be provisions for restroom facilities, trash receptacles, and an informational kiosk with an emphasis on boating safety. CalTrans will be encouraged to post “No Parking” signs along Highway 49.
2. A trailhead parking area, one-half mile west of Greenwood Creek, will be developed directly off of Highway 49 near the center of the parcel. It will provide additional access and parking. This parking area will initially provide 15 to 25 spaces with room to expand, if evaluation of monitoring data shows a need. There will be facilities for vehicles with boat and horse trailers. The size and function of this facility will be phased in to accommodate use, while meeting management objectives and appropriate visitor use numbers. The parking area will be enclosed by a barrier in order to prevent ORV use. Vehicle access for mining claimants will be maintained. The parking enclosure will have a gate to afford vehicle access for claimants and administrative vehicles. Trail systems will be built to accommodate multiple use non-motorized activities. Restroom facilities, trash receptacles, a kiosk, trailer parking, and a turn around area will be necessary at this site.
3. Existing vehicle routes throughout the planning unit will be closed. Vehicular use of these routes will be restricted to mining claimants, and reserved for administrative and emergency uses.
4. The BLM will harden the put-in/take-out site at the confluence of Greenwood Creek and the South Fork. River bank areas damaged by river users and fluctuating flows will be restored. Signs to inform users of the sensitive nature of this site will be placed. The put-in and take-out site will be limited to casual (non-permitted) recreationists.

Access – Trails

1. A trail will connect the Greenwood Creek parking lot and the South Fork. Barriers along the trail will be constructed to keep visitors on the trail to protect riparian habitat along Greenwood Creek, nearby cultural sites, and private property. Day use activities will be encouraged downstream of the put-in/take-out site. Users will be informed about the trail to the beach areas, and encourage activities at the beach sites.
2. Multiple use trails will be constructed as appropriate to connect the Highway 49 parking area with the rest of the planning unit.
3. The BLM shall investigate the possibility of a trail to the Planning Unit from the vicinity of Salmon Falls Bridge.
4. Trail use in the Greenwood Creek Planning Unit will be limited to non-motorized modes of travel.

Camping

1. There will be no developed campground on the Greenwood Creek Planning Unit. The current system of issuing commercial camping permits will be continued.
2. Camping will be allowed only in designated camping zones to reduce potential conflicts between recreation users, or with adjacent property owners. It will also reduce potential resource impacts and wildfire ignitions, as well as aid in the registration of campers and dredge users.

Vegetation Management

1. Grazing will be considered only as a tool for secondary management purposes, such as fuels management or noxious weed abatement.

Gold Seeking and Dredger Use

1. The public domain lands within the Greenwood Creek Planning Unit will be withdrawn from mineral entry.
2. There will be one permit allowed for up to a six-inch dredge within Dredging Area One for use between September 15 and October 15.
3. Within Dredging Area Two, the use of one six-inch dredge will be initially authorized, and evaluated for impacts and potential conflict before issuing permits for one additional dredge. Dredging Area Three must be full before a permit for Dredging Area Two may be issued.

4. Allow up to three permits, up to six-inch nozzle intake in size, within Dredging Area Three.
5. In Dredging Areas One and Two, floating dredges must be within 25 feet of the public land shoreline.
6. Only “hands and pans” will be used in unclaimed areas along Hastings Creek. Mechanized equipment or sluices are prohibited.
7. The area within and adjacent to Greenwood Creek will not be open to any form of gold hunting, including “hands and pans,” sluices, and dredges.
8. Dredging boundaries will be clearly marked.

Norton Ravine Planning Unit

Description of the Area

The Norton Ravine Planning Unit consists of approximately 939 acres of public land, much of which was acquired through BLM’s land acquisition program. These lands were acquired for wildlife habitat preservation, restoration, wildlife-oriented education and research, and for compatible public uses, all as may be consistent with the wildlife habitat preservation goals of the State of California and the BLM. Another objective was to connect existing public lands to enhance recreation opportunities and limit conflicts with private landowners. A Gold Rush-era mining camp, Rock Bridge, was located at the confluence of Norton Ravine and the South Fork.

The Norton Ravine Planning Unit is an exceptionally rich and scenic mix of habitats that include riparian, mixed chaparral, grassland, blue oak woodland and montane hardwood. Several listed plant species may be present. The perennial streams in this area have been identified by California Fish and Game as potential habitat for the Foothill yellow legged frog. The potential for watershed enhancements that would improve the biotic integrity and sustainability of the aquatic habitats in this area is great.

Legal public access to the Norton Ravine Planning Unit is by boat or trail only. There is no legal public access by road.



*Rafters on the beach near the restroom on the Norton Ravine Planning Unit.
Photo by BLM*

Present Management Situation

Whitewater recreation is the dominant use in this area. This is the start of the “gorge”, the popular rafting Class III section of the lower South Fork, the geology changes here as the river cuts through fault zones of amphibolite and chert.

In 1998 the county of El Dorado approached the BLM with a proposal for the construction of a restroom facility on the lower river. With the help of a grant from the State of California Department of Boating and Waterways, a public restroom facility was constructed during 1999 in Section 29 near the northern boundary of this planning unit.

The 200-acre Snyder/DeRosa parcel, acquired by the BLM from the California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), was the subject of a Memorandum of Understanding between the BLM and the WCB in which both organizations agreed the land would be cooperatively managed to protect significant biological resources and connect existing public land fronting one of the most popular recreation areas in the Western United States.

Goals Statement

The Norton Ravine Planning Unit will be managed to provide recreational opportunities consistent with protection of physical, social, and environmental resources. The only means of legal public access shall be by river or by trail, until such time BLM may acquire public road access. Low-impact recreational activities in a day use setting will be emphasized. Commercial uses and other organized group uses shall be allowed only with a BLM permit. The public lands shall be managed in a way that respects and protects private property rights. The BLM shall be receptive to opportunities to acquire land for access and habitat protection. The Norton Ravine

Planning Unit will be managed as VRM Class II.

Management Actions

General

1. The area will be managed primarily as a day-use area.
2. BLM boundaries will be identified to protect private properties.
3. The Norton Ravine Planning Unit will be managed as VRM Class II.
4. The BLM shall be receptive to opportunities to acquire land for access and habitat protection.

Access – Trails

1. The BLM shall investigate the possibility of a trail to the Planning Unit from the vicinity of Salmon Falls Bridge.
2. Where appropriate, the BLM shall construct multiple use trails, designed for hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians. The trails will be limited to non-motorized use only.

Camping

1. Overnight camping shall be by BLM permit only. The permit shall contain stipulations for campfires.

Vegetation Management

1. Grazing will be considered only as a tool for secondary management purposes, such as fuels management or noxious weed abatement.

Facilities

1. Recreation facilities, such as kiosks, trails, restrooms, picnic sites, or campsites, shall be constructed as needed, following standard BLM management practices.

Gold Seeking and Dredger Use

1. Public domain lands within the Norton Ravine Planning Unit will be withdrawn from the Mining Law of 1872.
2. A maximum of three dredges will be allowed at any one time. A permit must be obtained from the BLM.
3. One of the dredges may have an intake nozzle up to eight inches in diameter. The length of stay for the eight-inch dredge will be 28 days, which may be extended for an

additional 28 days if there is no demand for the site, and if the site has been inspected for permit compliance by the BLM. Eight-inch dredges will be restricted to areas where water is at least 10 feet deep.

4. The other two dredges will have intake nozzles less than eight inches in diameter. The length of stay will be fourteen days, with a possible extension of an additional fourteen days if there is no demand for the site, and if the site has been inspected for permit compliance.

5. Dredging will be allowed from the last weekend in May through October 15. There will be no daily time restrictions.

6. Gold dredges with an intake nozzle three inches in diameter or less may be used on a casual basis if the operator signs in at a BLM-established check-in point.

7. Floating dredges must be within 25 feet of the BLM-administered shoreline.

Pine Hill Planning Unit

Description of the Area

The lands of the Pine Hill Planning Unit total 1,284 acres of land, all of it public domain. Geologically and botanically, this area is unique. Soils derived from the weathering of gabbro bedrock are different from the surrounding area, and support plant communities that could not exist without them. The Pine Hill gabbro formation has been featured in several scientific publications. One of these, "Rare Plants and Natural Plant Communities: A strategy for the future," was a component of Fish and Wildlife 2000, published by the BLM to identify significant natural resources nationwide. It's geology and flora have been the subject of a dozen academic research projects over the last 20 years. Besides containing one of the largest concentrations of rare plant species in the state, and a large number of serpentine and/or gabbro endemic species, the Pine Hill gabbro formation is also important with respect to overall plant species diversity. In the Salmon Falls area, gabbro soils contain populations of four federally-listed plant species, three of which are known to occur on public land. Three species that occur on the Pine Hill gabbro formation have never been found growing elsewhere in the wild. The Pine Hill gabbro formation is visited regularly by classes from local schools, universities, and various interest groups.



Stebbins Morning Glory (Calystegia stebbinsii) is found only on gabbro soils in California's Mother Lode Region, and is listed by the Federal Government as Endangered.
Photo by BLM

Administration

This Planning Unit is administratively different from the other planning units within the South Fork American River Planning Area because the public lands of the Pine Hill Planning Unit fall within the Salmon Falls Management Unit of the newly-created Pine Hill Preserve. The Pine Hill Preserve is managed by a partnership of Federal, state, and local agencies under a cooperative management agreement with the common goal of conservation and recovery of the listed species.

In the near future, the Pine Hill Preserve partnership will be formulating a management plan for the entire Pine Hill Preserve, including the public lands of the Pine Hill Planning Unit. They will consider this portion of the South Fork American River Management Plan as non-binding public input. They may adopt, reject, or modify the following recommendations of the participants in the planning process

Present Management Situation

The Weber Creek portion of the planning unit receives a variety of recreational uses, including boating, off-road vehicle (ORV) use, and fishing activities. Commercial boating use is fairly light. Approximately 600 to a thousand commercial visitors use this site on an annual basis for lunch purposes. Based on site observations by river patrols, the Pine Hill Planning Unit does not receive a lot of use, compared to other stretches of the river; however there is some by private boaters and organized groups. There are several mining claims, mostly near Weber Creek.

Recently, ORV use in the Weber Creek area has increased, causing noticeable erosion and sediment loading into streams. Soil loss has impacted plant communities in general, and on sensitive species in particular. The confluence of the South Fork American River and Weber Creek has become a weekend party spot. ORV use at the river has been associated with severe erosion, destruction of riparian vegetation, and litter. Organized ORV groups, notably four-wheel drive groups, have been very good about volunteering to help repair the damage.

Residents of an adjoining subdivision are concerned with the possibility of a wildfire being ignited.

Recommended Goals Statement

A management priority of the Pine Hill Planning Unit is the preservation in perpetuity of the rare plant species and plant communities of the western El Dorado County gabbro formation. The BLM will make it a priority to acquire and secure permanent public motorized vehicle access to the South Fork American River. An active program of vegetation management, including noxious weed control and rehabilitation of damaged areas, shall be implemented. A fuel and fire management plan, consistent with rare plant preservation, shall be implemented by the BLM and other Preserve partners. The current mineral withdrawal shall be continued. The public lands shall be managed in a way that respects and protects private property rights, and balances competing uses. The planning unit shall be managed as VRM Class II. Prior existing rights, such as mining claims or rights-of-way, shall be respected. Reasonable access to the river and the public lands will accommodate a wide range of recreation uses, including, but not limited to boating, hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, bicycling, recreational gold-panning and suction dredging, consistent with resource protection.

Recommended Management Actions

General

1. Day use at the Pine Hill Planning Unit shall be unrestricted.
2. The Pine Hill Planning Unit will be managed as VRM Class II.
3. The BLM shall support access to the public lands from the river.
4. The Pine Hill Planning Unit shall be closed to target shooting until a responsible group makes a proposal to regulate it.

5. Hunting shall continue to be allowed within the planning unit.
6. Commercial whitewater users will not be authorized to put-in or take-out in the Pine Hills Planning Unit.
7. The BLM shall use its discretion in the issuance of special use permits on the Pine Hills Planning Unit.
8. The BLM shall seek funding for the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department, through a memorandum of understanding, to patrol the Pine Hill Planning Unit.
9. The BLM will allow for higher fire restrictions to be in effect all year round that would prohibit open fires and allow only gas stoves.

Access – Roads

1. The BLM shall maintain the Boulder Mine Road and the existing road to the confluence of Weber Creek and the South Fork American River. This road shall be subject to seasonal closures, generally from December 1 until April 1, but variable depending on conditions.
2. The BLM shall develop a comprehensive road maintenance plan for the Planning Unit.
3. The BLM shall develop an adopt-a-trail/adopt-a-route program while developing a year-around monitoring plan with the local community.
4. The BLM shall allow people to bring in their own boats by road.

Access – Trails

1. The BLM shall plan and construct a trails system for hiking and the use of mountain bikes.
2. The BLM shall evaluate the equestrian use of the trails system. Parking areas for horse trailers will not be constructed in the Pine Hill Planning Unit, however, the BLM shall make an effort to tie trails into the existing equestrian trails system administered by the Folsom Lake State Recreation Area as an extension of that system.

Camping

1. Camping shall be allowed by permit only, but campers will not be allowed fires of any type.

Facilities

1. The BLM shall evaluate the Planning Unit to determine if sanitary facilities are needed, and, if so, where they will be located.

Gold Seeking and Dredger Use

1. The public domain lands of the Pine Hill Planning Unit will continue to be withdrawn from mineral entry.
2. A maximum of two dredges with intake nozzles three inches in diameter or larger on a two-week permit will be allowed at any one time. A dredging permit must be obtained from the BLM.
3. One of the dredges may have an intake nozzle up to eight inches in diameter. The length of stay for the eight-inch dredge will be 28 days, which may be extended for an additional 28 days if there is no demand for the site, and if the site has been inspected for permit compliance by the BLM. Eight-inch dredges will be restricted to areas where water is at least 10 feet deep.
4. The other dredges will have an intake nozzle less than eight inches in diameter. The length of stay will be fourteen days, with a possible extension of an additional fourteen days if there is no demand for the site, and if the site has been inspected for permit compliance.
5. Backpack gold dredges with an intake nozzle three inches in diameter or less may be used on a casual, day-use basis if the operator signs a permit in at a BLM-established check-in point.

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Appendices

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Parcel C & Ponderosa Planning Unit	Map 3
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Dave Moore Planning Unit	Map 4
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Greenwood Creek Planning Unit	Map 5
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Norton Ravine Planning Unit	Map 6
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Pine Hill Preserve Planning Unit	Map 7
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AUTHORITY

The Founding Fathers deliberately set up a system by which the government is restrained from doing anything without properly obtained authority. If a proposal is not authorized by an Act of Congress, or an executive action based on an Act of Congress, it probably won't get done. For the BLM, proper authority is contained within the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, signed into law in October of that year by President Ford.

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), Section 102 (a) states:
"The Congress declares that it is the policy of the United States that --

(1) public lands be retained in Federal ownership...

(2) the national interest will be best realized if the public lands and their resources are periodically and systematically inventoried and their present and future use is projected through a land use planning process coordinated with other federal and State planning efforts;

(7) goals and objectives be established by law as guidelines for public land use planning, and that management be on the basis of multiple use and sustained yield unless otherwise specified by law;

(8) the public lands be managed in a manner that will protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource, and archaeological values; that where appropriate, will preserve and protect certain public lands in their natural condition; that will provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife and domestic animals; and that will provide for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and use;..."

(12) the public lands be managed in a manner which recognizes the Nation's need for domestic sources of minerals, food, timber, and fiber from the public lands..."

Further, FLPMA, Section 202 states:

"(a) The Secretary shall, with public involvement and consistent with the terms and conditions of this Act, develop, maintain, and, when appropriate, revise land use plans which provide by tracts or areas for the use of public lands.

(c) In the development and revision of land use plans, the Secretary shall--

(1) use and observe the principles of multiple use and sustained yield set forth in this and other applicable law;

(2) use a systematic interdisciplinary approach to achieve integrated consideration of physical, biological, economic, and other sciences;

- (4) rely, to the extent it is available, on the inventory of the public lands, their resources, and other values;
- (5) consider present and potential uses of the public lands;
- (6) consider the relative scarcity of the values involved and the availability of alternative means (including recycling) and sites for realization of those values;
- (7) weigh long-term benefits to the public against short-term benefits;
- (8) provide for compliance with applicable pollution control laws, including State and Federal air, water, noise, or other pollution standards or implementation plans, and;
- (9) to the extent consistent with the laws governing the administration of the public lands, coordinate the land use inventory, planning, and management activities of or for such lands with the land use and management programs of other Federal Departments and agencies and of the States and local governments within which the lands are located..."

(f) The Secretary shall allow an opportunity for public involvement and by regulation shall establish procedures, including public hearings where appropriate, to give Federal, State, and local governments and the public, adequate notice and opportunity to comment upon and participate in the formulation of plans and programs relating to the management of the public lands."

In Section 103 (c), FLPMA provides the following definition:

"The term 'multiple use' means the management of the public lands and their various resource values so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the present and future needs of the American people; making the most judicious use of the land for some or all of these resources or related services over areas large enough to provide sufficient latitude for periodic adjustments in use to conform to changing needs and conditions; the use of some land for less than all the resources; a combination of balanced and diverse resource uses that takes into account the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and nonrenewable resources, including, but not limited to, recreation, range, timber, minerals, watershed, wildlife and fish, and natural scenic, scientific and historical values; and harmonious and coordinated management of the various resources without permanent impairment of the productivity of the land and the quality of the environment with consideration being given to the relative values of the resources and not necessarily to the combination of uses that will give the greatest economic return or the greatest unit output."

The Planning Process

The South Fork American River Management Plan was prepared through the Community-Based planning process. For the past thirteen years, the Folsom Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has been experimenting with this unusual form of land use planning and management.

Conventional Federal Land-Use Planning

By law, all Bureau lands must be covered by a land use plan. Plans are periodically updated to accommodate changing conditions.

Conventional land use planning under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 and the National Environmental Quality Act of 1969 is a complex process. It consists of first holding public scoping meetings to define the issues. Next, resource inventories are conducted by Bureau specialists. The inventory includes geology, vegetation, wildlife, cultural values, and land use history. Then, in the office, Bureau planners develop a series of management alternatives. One of the alternatives is selected as the preferred action, and a draft management plan and environmental assessment are written. These are sent out for formal public comment. The public comments are used to formulate the final plan. Often, the final plan will be a modification of the preferred alternative.

This process has been the focus of a great deal of public dissatisfaction that has often resulted in administrative appeals to management plans and more than a few lawsuits. One of the major sources of dissatisfaction seems to be the widespread perception that local citizens do not have a significant voice in either the development of the plan or in the decision-making. In its simplest form, people feel as if the Federal Government is dictating to them how their lives will be lived, regardless of how or what they think. In recent years, there has been much public acrimony over land use planning, not only between citizens and the agencies, but also between the citizens themselves. In their attempts to satisfy all points of view, the agencies seem to have managed only to intensify the conflicts.

Reasons for an Unconventional Approach

The conventional land use planning process was designed with large, uninhabited tracts of Federal wild lands in mind. This does not work well in general, and seems especially inappropriate in the urban-wild lands interface zone of the Sierra Nevada. Part of the problem for the BLM's Folsom Field Office is the small size and scattered nature of the Federal parcels. Another part is the very close proximity of neighbors. To them, the BLM-administered parcels are an integral part of their residential neighborhood, not an abstraction off in the distance.

The scattered nature and limited acreage of the public lands has also made the BLM much more dependent on close working relationships with local and state agencies than in more conventional situations. Early on, it became apparent that other planning processes needed to be

explored. It seemed beneficial that plans reflect the unique character of each local community.

Since BLM land use plans can affect the economic, ecological and cultural character of communities, the communities should be substantially involved throughout the entire process. Also, land use debates are better conducted in the community arena than in formal public hearings with individuals pitted against agencies.

With all this in mind, we envisioned a procedure that included direct public involvement throughout the entire process, including goal setting, inventory, alternative development, plan writing, decision making and plan implementation, with a focus on local communities as the primary public involvement element.

A fundamental question has to do with the appropriateness of local communities being given special standing in the planning process when the public resources belong to all citizens of the United States. Two comments on that; first, no one is deliberately excluded from the process. Individuals living outside the planning area will have ample opportunity to participate, as guaranteed by the process required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Secondly, care is being taken to ensure the plan is consistent with all appropriate Federal laws and policies, thus ensuring the interests of all American citizens are respected.

The Bureau of Land Management will remain responsible for the Public Lands of the United States, and will retain all its management authority. Management actions, such as prescribed burns or trail construction, will not be turned over to private citizens, but will be conducted by the BLM in close coordination with adjacent property owners. All contract work must be placed out for bid with no special breaks for the local community. There is no legal authority for the local manager to delegate responsibility for public land management.

If community customs, culture, economic and ecological concerns are to be considered in public land management, then changes need to occur in the way plans and decisions are made. At the heart of these changes is allowing local community values to be the underlying factor in the planning process, within the bounds of the constraints provided by Federal law and policy.

South Fork American Planning

Beginning in the summer of 2000, the BLM has met regularly with a group of interested and concerned citizens in the Coloma area to produce a draft plan. This citizen's group was largely self-selected, with participation being an individual decision. As hoped, the group was made up of local residents, property owners, river recreationists, gold miners, and others with a special interest in the river. There were 48 meetings before the process ended in April, 2003.

As explained in the Introduction, the consensus method was used in the public meetings to arrive at the decisions contained in this plan.

Appendix C

South Fork American River Planning Meetings

August 31, 2000	Gold Hill School	34 Attendees signed in
September 11, 2000	Gold Hill School	42
September 25, 2000	Gold Hill School	35
October 10, 2000	Gold Hill School	25
October 24, 2000	Gold Hill School	15
November 16, 2000	Gold Hill School	11
December 5, 2000	Gold Hill School	11
December 14, 2000	Gold Hill School	13
January 9, 2001	Gold Hill School	13
January 23, 2001	Gold Hill School	12
February 10, 2001	Lotus Fire Station	12
February 12, 2001	Gold Hill School	13
February 26, 2001	Gold Hill School	15
March 3, 2001	Miner's Cabin Field Trip	14
March 6, 2001	Gold Hill School	20
March 27, 2001	Gold Hill School	30
March 31, 2001	Henningsen-Lotus Park	10
April 5, 2001	Gold Hill School	18
April 17, 2001	Gold Hill School	22
May 8, 2001	Gold Hill School	34
May 19, 2001	Dave Moore Field Trip	
May 22, 2001	Gold Hill School	33
June 7, 2001	Gold Hill School	55
June 16, 2001	Dave Moore Nature Area	17
June 21, 2001	Gold Hill School	21
July 5, 2001	Odd Fellows Hall	43
July 17, 2001	Odd Fellows Hall	27
July 28, 2001	Dave Moore Nature Area	11
July 31, 2001	Odd Fellows Hall	17
August 7, 2001	Odd Fellows Hall	44
August 18, 2001	Greenwood Creek Field Trip	
August 21, 2001	Odd Fellows Hall	38
September 6, 2001	Odd Fellows Hall	22
September 11, 2001	Odd Fellows Hall	50
September 20, 2001	Odd Fellows Hall	31
September 29, 2001	Odd Fellows Hall	24
October 10, 2001	Odd Fellows Hall	75
October 13, 2001	Norton Ravine Field Trip	
October 18, 2001	Odd Fellows Hall	37
October 23, 2001	Odd Fellows Hall	60
November 1, 2001	Odd Fellows Hall	40
November 7, 2001	Odd Fellows Hall	24
November 15, 2001	Odd Fellows Hall	44
November 27, 2001	Odd Fellows Hall	80
December 6, 2001	Odd Fellows Hall	92
December 11, 2001	Odd Fellows Hall	37
June 20, 2002	Folsom BLM Office	9
April 26, 2003	Odd Fellows Hall	33

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Visitor Capacity South Fork American River

An Introduction to the Concept

Everyone who has lived in California for any length of time is very aware of the way the State's population is increasing. According to the Census Bureau, California's population jumped from 29.8 million in 1990 to 33.9 million in 2000, an increase of 13.8%, with no sign of slowing down. The increasing number of people is putting an ever-increasing strain on the entire infrastructure. Both public agencies and many private businesses are feeling the pinch of doing an adequate job providing goods and services.

Outdoor recreation is no exception. Parks, campgrounds, and other outdoor areas are feeling the effects of more and more people.

The American public expects the Federal land management agencies, including the BLM, to provide as wide a range of high-quality outdoor recreational opportunities as possible, for as great a range of users as possible, while maintaining the health of the land consistent with legal mandates and land-use designations.

Two thoughts must be kept in mind on the subject of outdoor recreation. The first is that the American public puts a very high value on outdoor recreation in general, and believes it has a right to expect the opportunity for high-quality recreational experiences on public lands. The second is that public land managers have a responsibility to maintain the public lands in a way that meets and sustains public expectations.

One of the more valuable tools available to land managers, public or private, in dealing with increased use is the concept of carrying, or visitor capacity. The concept of Visitor Capacity is intended to help land management agencies sustain recreation opportunities while maintaining environmental, social, and managerial conditions in an acceptable fashion. It is a complicated system, involving judgments on the relative acceptability of recreational impacts on a case-by-case, site-specific basis.

The Basic Idea

Visitor capacity is currently defined as a prescribed number and type of visitors that will be accommodated in an area. Two factors are considered, the land itself, and the quality of the recreation experience.

The land, of course, is the setting for outdoor recreation activity. There is a direct correlation between the quality of the outdoor environment and the quality of an outdoor recreation experience. All recreation activities, over time, will have some degree of impact on the

condition of the land. Some impacts are acceptable, but others are not. It depends on the nature of the activity, and on the location and type of natural habitat where the activity takes place. Environmental factors, which can be impacted by recreation, include water quality, soils, plants, and wildlife among others. Most of these can be accurately measured and evaluated.

Recreation facilities such as parking lots, picnic tables, restrooms, or trails are also a part of the outdoor setting, and can be impacted by continuous use. Like the environmental factors, the condition and use of facilities can be accurately measured and evaluated.

Recreation satisfaction is harder to measure than the physical aspects of the environmental setting. The quality of the recreation experience – personal satisfaction and associated benefits -- is essentially a perception by an individual and, as such, is more difficult, but not impossible to measure. One way is to simply go into a recreation area and systematically ask people how they are doing. Observation is another way – are there lines to use the restrooms? Or do people seem inhibited from fully enjoying themselves? Do new arrivals take one look and go somewhere else? Much of the perceived quality of a recreation experience has to do with the number of other people at a recreation site.

Since the general population and the demand for outdoor recreation are increasing, this means that to sustain outdoor recreation opportunities over time, the number of people using a recreation site will have to be monitored closely, along with the impacts on the physical environment.

To make a decision on Visitor Capacity, scientific information provides the starting point of discussion on what is or isn't acceptable. Judgments on the acceptability of impacts will vary widely, depending on the physical and biological characteristics of a given site, the sort of activities people want to do at that site.

Follow-Up – Adaptive Management

Once the acceptable limits of impacts are decided, the managing agency has something to work with. Thresholds can be established that will indicate if a site is beginning to exceed its prescribed Visitor Capacity. If that is the case, the agency can then take the actions necessary to correct the situation. Typically, this will be some sort of restriction on visitor behavior, or perhaps an expansion of recreation facilities. The policy of the BLM is to first utilize the least restrictive management actions required to resolve the problem, then, if necessary, progress to more restrictive rules. Organized group and commercial permittees will be restricted before casual users.

Visitor Capacity on the South Fork American River

During the planning process for the South Fork American River, the BLM, working with the River Planning Group, set a number of Visitor Capacity levels for several planning units, and in some cases, for a particular site within a planning unit. Later, as promised, the BLM established a series of easily measured thresholds that would indicate when Visitor Capacity was being exceeded.

These thresholds serve as a **trigger or signal to managers** that different management strategies,

facilities, or programs may be needed to sustain the area's resources, visitor experiences, and management effectiveness.

At this time, Visitor Capacity levels have been established for three BLM Planning Units along the South Fork American River. These are Miner's Cabin, The Dave Moore Nature Area, and Greenwood Creek. All three have a history of heavy visitor use.

Miner's Cabin

Miner's Cabin Site

The Miner's Cabin site itself has the potential of suffering degradation of both the environment and the quality of the recreational experience through overuse. The heaviest recorded use of the site was 465 people on August 11, 1996. The restroom facility was not designed to accommodate such numbers in a short space of time. There is limited room for boats along the shore.

Currently, BLM has not placed a total limit on the number passengers that a commercial permittee can have on the site at any one time. In the past, this has not caused any problems because use has been fairly distributed between outfitters having numerous choices for lunch spots on the upper and lower runs. All organized permittees cannot exceed 25 people on their trips.

Gold Dredges

Dredging for gold also carries the potential for overuse. There is public concern over engine noise and sediment drift, as well as the number of small dredges that may be used.

Camping

The visitor who wishes to camp in this area must first obtain a camping permit/dredging permit from the Folsom Field Office. There are a total of six sites available for overnight camping, three of which are reserved for dredging permittees and three are reserved for other users. Each site has an assigned capacity based on its size and location. These sites are available on first come first serve basis. BLM will monitor each site through out the summer to insure that the conditions are staying within an acceptable range of impacts.

Table 1
Visitor Capacity, Miner's Cabin Planning Unit

INDICATORS	MANAGEMENT ACTION LEVEL-1	MANAGEMENT ACTION LEVEL-2	MANAGEMENT ACTION LEVEL-3
1. Number of people at Miner's Cabin site greater than 200 at one time. Occurs three or more times during the year.	Set a time schedule for all permittees. Require all permittees to obtain a BLM SRUP permit to use the facility	Set a maximum visitor use limit for all permittees and/or restrict number of permittees and days of use	Open up another site for lunching for permittees
2. More than a 10 minute wait to use the Miner's Cabin restroom facilities. Occurs more than three times during the season	Set a time schedule for all permittees	Set a maximum visitor use limit for all permittees and/or restrict number of permittees and days of use	Require permittees to carry a portable toilet system
3. More than five small dredges at one time	Monitor for user conflicts and environmental impacts	Restrict number of small dredges	No day-use permits for small dredges
4. Significant Vegetation Loss Associated with camping	Restrict visitor movements on site	Restrict number of people on site through the permit process	Restrict human use of site until vegetation recovers
5. More than 200 feet of sedimentation drift from gold dredges	Smaller size dredge, move location and/or fewer # of dredges. Longer spacing	Smaller size. Fewer number of dredges and longer spacing	Limit number of permits at one time
6. Excessive noise from gold dredges	Require better mufflers or smaller engines	Require smaller dredges. Issue fewer permits.	No dredging permits issued.

Ponderosa Parcel

At this time, conditions and uses of the Ponderosa Parcel do not require the establishment of Visitor Capacities. The parcel will be continuously monitored to determine is Visitor Capacity levels need to be set and enforced.

Parcel C

At this time, conditions and uses of Parcel C do not require the establishment of Visitor Capacities. The parcel will be continuously and systematically monitored to determine if Visitor Capacities need to be set and enforced. The county has set camping standards for private campgrounds, such as the one under lease on this parcel. Currently, no more than three commercial and one organized group permits will be issued for use of Parcel C.

Dave Moore

Parking Lot

Visitor Capacity at the Dave Moore Nature Area is controlled by the availability of parking spaces. Currently, 65 parking spaces are designed for the parking lot.

Trail Use

Use of the Dave Moore Trail shall be limited to foot and wheelchair traffic. Mountain bikes and equestrian use will not be authorized. Potential trail problems include improper sanitary practices, trash, trail proliferation, accelerated erosion, vegetation reduction, and conflicts between disabled users and other visitors.

Visitor Capacity levels will be established at a later date, based on results of the monitoring program.

Table 2
Visitor Capacity, Dave Moore Nature Area

MONITORING STANDARDS	MANAGEMENT ACTION LEVEL-1	MANAGEMENT ACTION LEVEL-2	MANAGEMENT ACTION LEVEL-3
1. Parking area full more than three times during heavy use season	Restrict size of groups	Restrict number of permits	No group permits
2. More than a five minute wait to use the restroom facilities. Occurs more than 3 times during the season.	Install Portable toilets	Reduce Number of Parking Spaces	Increase Entrance Fee
3. Cleanliness - On-site litter fills a 30-gallon bag.	Increase number of trash containers. Post signs to encourage proper trash disposal	Empty trash containers more often.	Increase Entrance Fee
4. Significant Vegetation loss associated with erosion	Delineate trails	Place Barriers to block access to problem area.	Exclude Problem Area from areas used by groups under permit.
5. Evidence of erosion on trail	Monitor closely to determine cause of erosion	Harden eroded areas of trail	Reduce number of trail users through the permit system
6. Trail Use Conflicts	Increase Patrols, Enforce Restrictions on types of Trail Users	Construct "turn-outs" on narrow portions of trail so people can get out of each other's way	Require trail use permits
7. Sanitation – Improper Human Waste Disposal	Monitor to Determine problem parameters.	Install Portable Toilet	Reduce parking spaces

Greenwood Creek

Greenwood Creek Complex

The Greenwood Creek parking area, the trail to the river along Greenwood Creek itself, and the put-in/take-out area at the confluence of Greenwood Creek and the river is a sensitive zone with significant natural and cultural resources. This complex is susceptible to damage from overuse. The put-in and take-out site will be limited to casual recreationists. Visitor Capacity levels will be set at a later date, based on results of the monitoring program.

Beach Area, Restroom, Camping Area

This popular area is used by commercial operators as a lunch and rest stop, as well as an overnight camping site.

Dredging Sites

Dredging for gold carries the potential for overuse. There are public concerns for engine noise, sediment drift, and the number of dredges on the site.

Capacity levels have been set for the three dredge use areas with a total of six permits at any one time.

Vineyard Parking Lot, Trail System

Visitor Capacity will be controlled by the 15 to 25-vehicle parking lot, initially. Visitor use and environmental impacts will be monitored to ascertain how the addition of parking opportunities affects management of this area. Future developments of this parking area would depend on how providing additional access affects planning objectives. Use of this site and trail systems will be built to accommodate multiple use activities, but use will be limited to non-motorized modes of travel. Restroom facilities, trash receptacles, a kiosk, trailer parking, and a turn around area will be necessary. There will be no developed campground. The current system of commercial camping permits will be continued.

Capacity levels will be set at a later date, based on results of the monitoring program.

Table 3

Visitor Capacity, Greenwood Creek Planning Unit

MONITORING STANDARDS	MANAGEMENT ACTION LEVEL-1	MANAGEMENT ACTION LEVEL-2	MANAGEMENT ACTION LEVEL-3
1. Number of people at Beach Day Use Area greater than 230 at one time. Occurs three or more times during the year.	Set a time schedule for all permittees	Set a maximum visitor use limit for all permittees	Assign Lunch sites to permittees
2. More than a 10 minute wait to use the Beach Day Use Area restroom facilities. Occurs more than three times during the season.	Require all commercial operators to obtain a BLM permit.	Set a time schedule for all permittees. Set a maximum visitor use limit for all permittees and/or restrict number of permittees and days of use.	Require permittees to carry a portable toilet system.
3. Greenwood Creek Trail and put-in/take-out area showing signs of significant vegetation reduction, erosion, new trails	Restrict user movements through the use of signs, barriers	Require a permit to put-in or take out	Close area to boating use
4. Cleanliness – In Beach area, litter fills a 30-gallon bag	Increase number of trash containers. Post signs to encourage proper trash disposal.	Issue warning and/or citation to permit holder	Revoke permit.
5. Cleanliness – In Greenwood Creek area, litter fills a 30-gallon bag.	Increase number of trash containers. Post signs to encourage proper disposal of trash.	Empty trash containers more often	Increase a parking fee
6. More than 200 feet of Sediment Drift from Gold Dredges	Smaller size Dredge; Move Location and/or fewer number of dredges. Longer spacing	Smaller size, fewer number of dredges and longer spacing.	Limit number of permits at one time.
7. Noise from Gold Dredges exceeds County standards	Require better Mufflers or smaller engines	Require Smaller Dredges. Issue fewer permits	No dredging permits issued.

Norton Ravine

To date, problems associated with overuse have not been observed in the Norton's Ravine Planning Unit. The Planning Unit will be monitored with particular attention given to the BLM restroom, gold dredging areas, and Equestrian Way access.

Pine Hill

Visitor Capacities for the Pine Hill Planning Area will be established by the interagency Management Team.

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Glossary of Terms

People often complain about the use of acronyms in government documents, sometimes justifiably so. An effort was made to avoid the use of acronyms in this plan, but a few were used. All of these are defined in the text of the plan the first time they were used. For the reader's convenience, the following is a list of acronyms.

BLM	Bureau of Land Management
ETC	Environmental Traveling Companion
MFP	Management Framework Plan
ORV	Off-Road Vehicle
PG&E	Pacific Gas and Electric (Company)
SFA	South Fork American (River)
SMUD	Sacramento Municipal Utilities District
SUP	Special Use Permit
SRUP	Special Recreation Use Permit
VRM	Visual Resources Management
WCB	Wildlife Conservation Board

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VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Bureau has a basic stewardship responsibility to identify and protect visual values on public lands. The quality of the visual environment has become increasingly important to the American public as growth and alteration of the natural environment continues.

The Bureau prepares and maintains on a continuing basis an inventory of visual values on public lands. This is usually completed through the Land Use Planning process, but in the case of the South Fork American Plan it will be completed within the confines of this community based plan.

Visual management planning objectives were developed through this community plan. The plans Visual Resource Management (VRM) objectives provide the visual management standards for the design and development of future projects and for rehabilitation of existing projects. These standards and objectives are incorporated into the VRM program to identify visual values, assign VRM Classes, and identify measures and management methods which could mitigate potential visual impacts of future activities and projects.

Visual resource management classes are assigned through the planning process. The assignment of visual management classes is ultimately based on an inventory evaluation and management decisions made in planning. The classes assist managers in determining allowable changes, which may or may not take place in specific areas with specific management classes. The VRM management class determination is developed by giving a numeric rating to each of four different criteria. These evaluation criteria are, Scenic Quality Rating, Sensitivity Level Rating, Distance Zone Determination, and Special Area Designation.

Scenic Quality Rating

“Scenic Quality”, is an existing scenic quality or measure of visual appeal. Several natural landscape factors influence the scenic quality of an area.

Sensitivity Level Rating

Sensitivity levels relate to public concern or interest in scenic quality for specific areas. Several factors influence these levels, including types of users, amount of use, public perception, and adjacent land uses.

Distance Zone Determination

“Distance Zones” relate to the proximity of the observer to the landscape.

Special Area Designation

Special designations such as Wilderness Areas, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Wild and Scenic Rivers, etc.

The following is an explanation of the five different management classes:

VRM Class I areas - Preserve the existing character of landscapes.

Provide for natural ecological changes in VRM Class I areas. Some very limited management activities may occur in these areas. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be very low and must not attract attention. Changes should repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, texture, and scale found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

VRM Class II areas - Retain the existing character of landscapes.

Manage VRM Class II lands for low levels of change to the characteristic landscape. Management activities may be seen but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, texture, and scale found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

VRM Class III areas - Partially retain the existing character of landscapes.

Manage VRM Class III lands for moderate levels of change to the characteristic landscape. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements of form, line color, texture, and scale of adjacent scenery and man made visual intrusions.

VRM Class IV areas - Allow major modifications of existing character of landscapes.

Manage VRM Class IV lands for moderate levels of change to the characteristic landscape. Management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the effect of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture.

VRM Class V areas - Applied to areas where the natural character has been disturbed to a point where rehabilitation is needed to bring it back up to one of the other four classifications.

Management of these areas will vary. In some cases such as the continued development of an oil/gas field or the continued operation or expansion of a rock quarry, may not present many opportunities to improve or maintain visual resources. Management actions may tie future expansion or operations to rehabilitation or abandoned project lands, or mitigation of existing facilities. The management objective in these areas is to alter the landscape character to that of a more natural setting.

Appendix G

MAPS

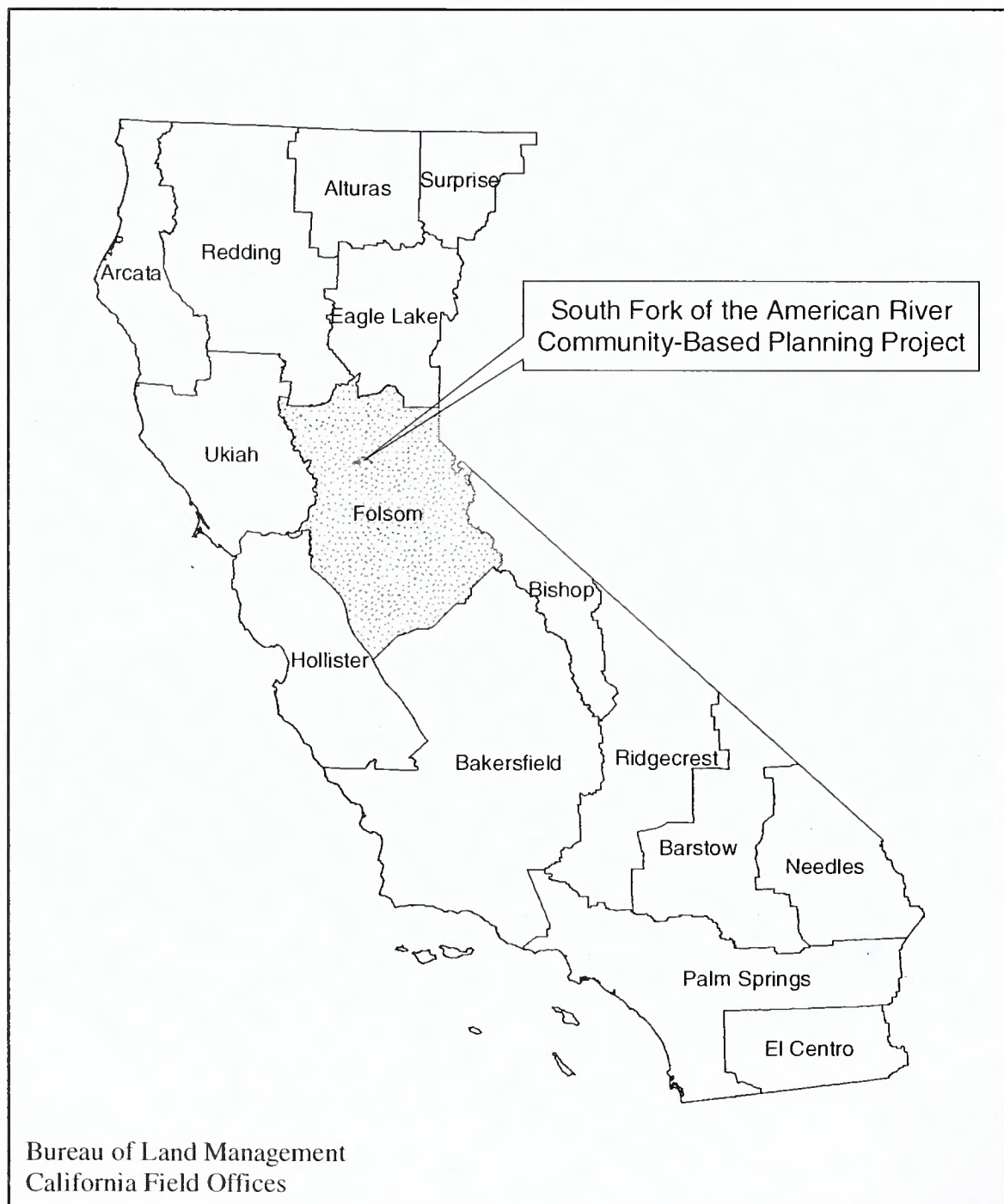
South Fork American Planning Area - Project	Map 1
Miner's Cabin Planning Unit	Map 2
Parcel C & Ponderosa Planning Unit	Map 3
Dave Moore Planning Unit	Map 4
Greenwood Creek Planning Unit	Map 5
Norton Ravine Planning Unit	Map 6
Pine Hill Preserve Planning Unit	Map 7

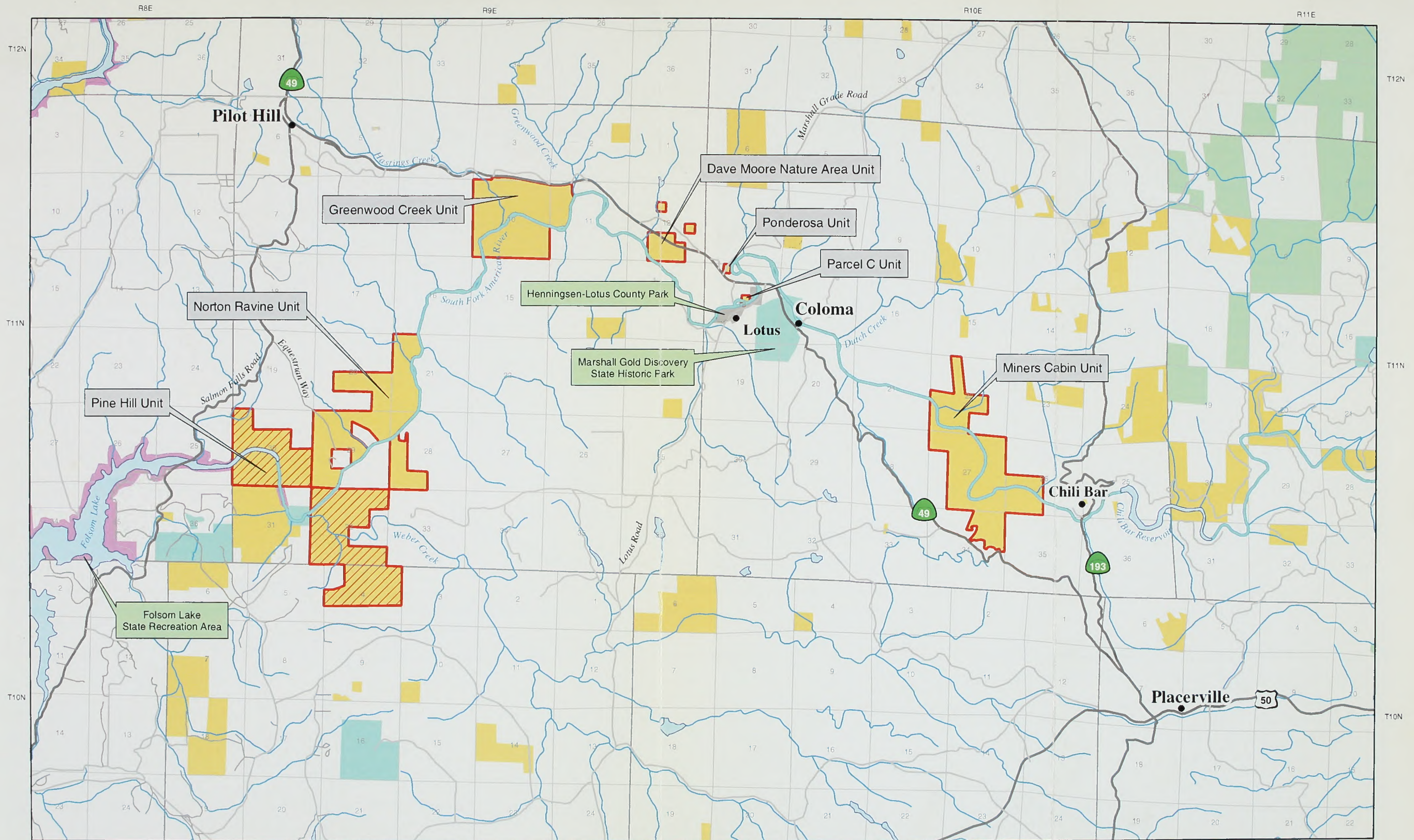
Map Disclaimer

The following maps are to be used for the South Fork of the American River Community-Based Planning process. These are informative maps specifically designed to illustrate the areas being discussed. These maps are not authorized for any uses outside of this specific planning process. Every reasonable effort has been made to assure the accuracy of the maps and data provided; nevertheless, some information may not be accurate. The Bureau of Land Management assumes no responsibility arising from use of this information.








Data Disclaimer

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data compiled from various sources. Spatial information may not meet national map accuracy standards. This information may be updated without notification. Before making decisions using the information provided on these maps, contact the Bureau of Land Management, Folsom Field Office, to confirm the validity of the data provided.





0 0.5 1 2 3 4 Miles

	Bureau of Land Management		Local Government		Pine Hill Unit
	Bureau of Reclamation		State		Planning Project Units
	US Forest Service				

South Fork of the American River

Community Based Planning Project

General Location

(Map 1)



US Department of the Interior

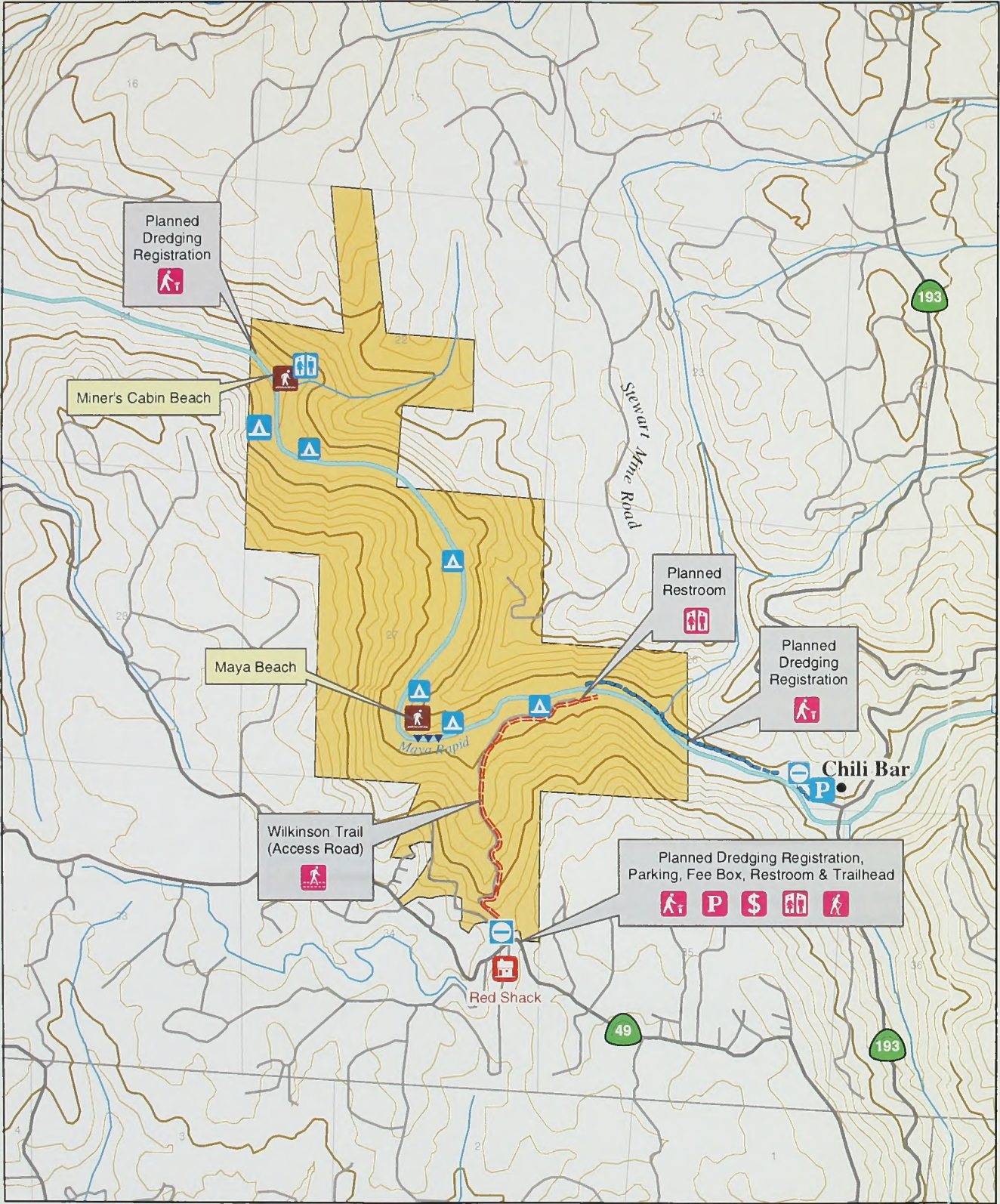
Bureau of Land Management

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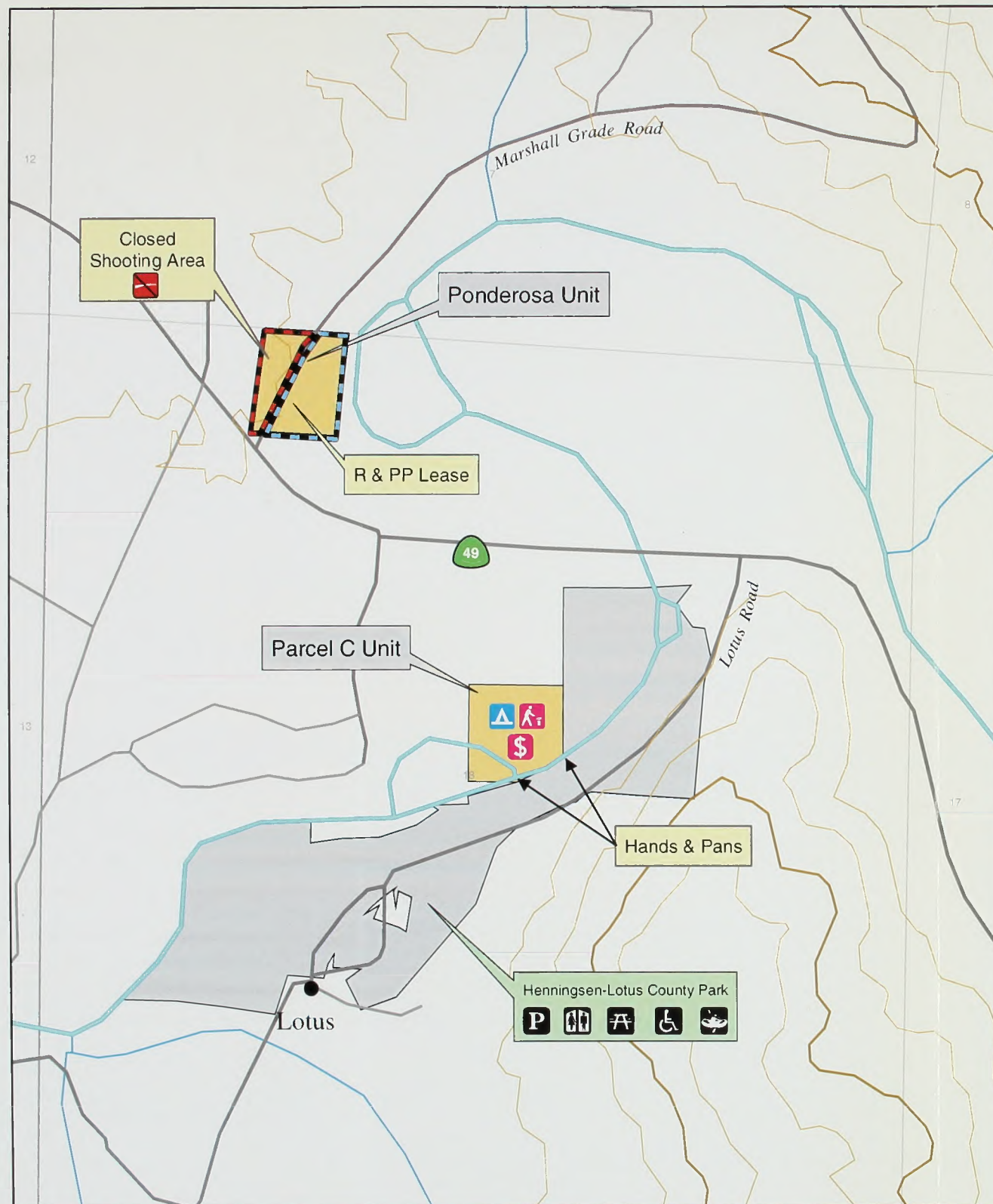
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South Fork of the American River
Miners Cabin Unit
(Map 2)



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	Planning Project Unit		Restroom		NO Firearms
	Local Government		Picnic Area		Camping
	Parking		Barrier Free		Registration
	Boat Put In - Take Out		Fee Box		

South Fork of the American River

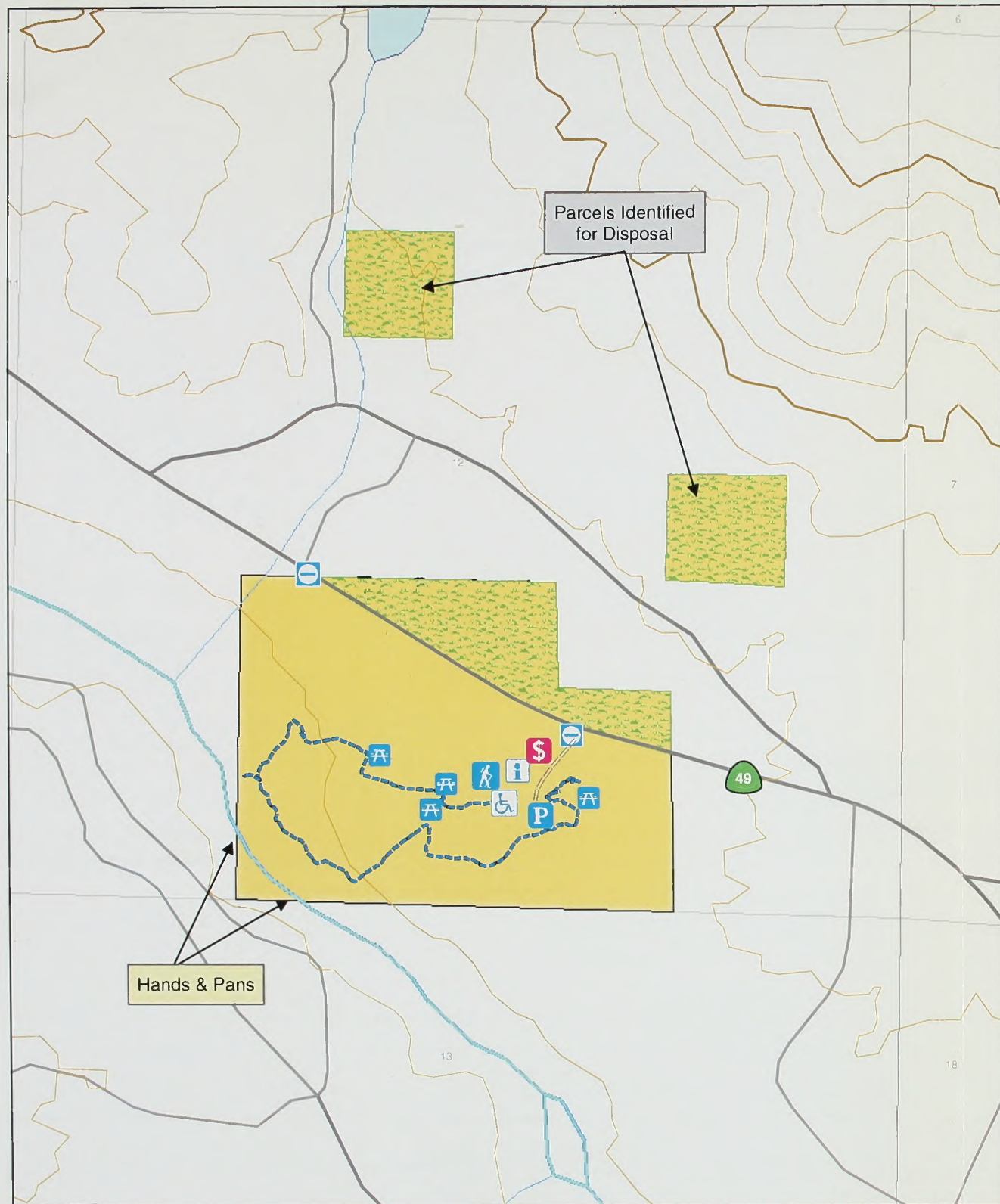
Ponderosa and Parcel C Unit










(Map 3)



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- | | | |
|---|---|---|
|  Planning Project Unit |  Trailhead |  Existing Trail |
|  Restroom |  Kiosk |  Grazing Allotment |
|  Picnic Site |  Gate |  Fee Box |

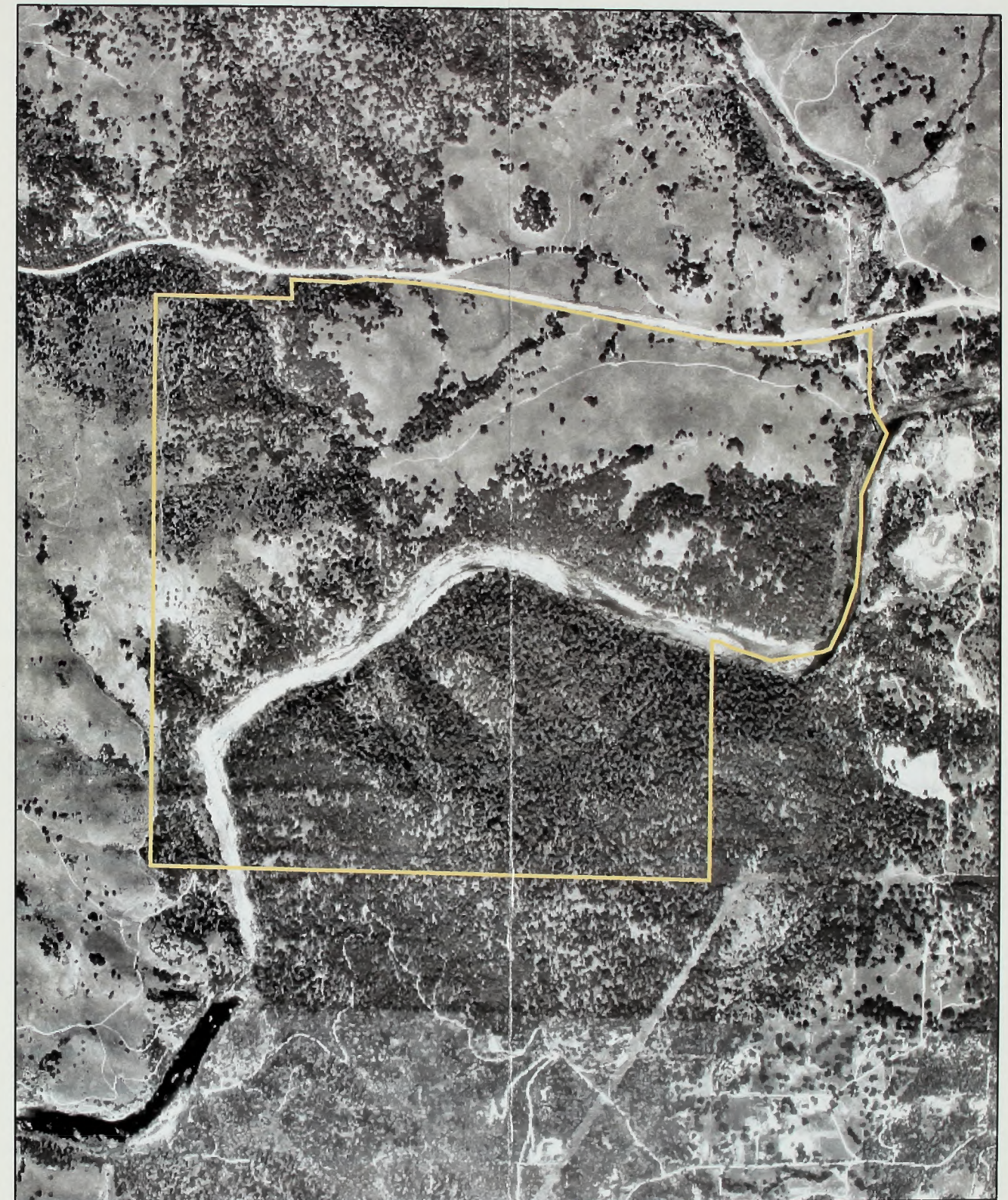
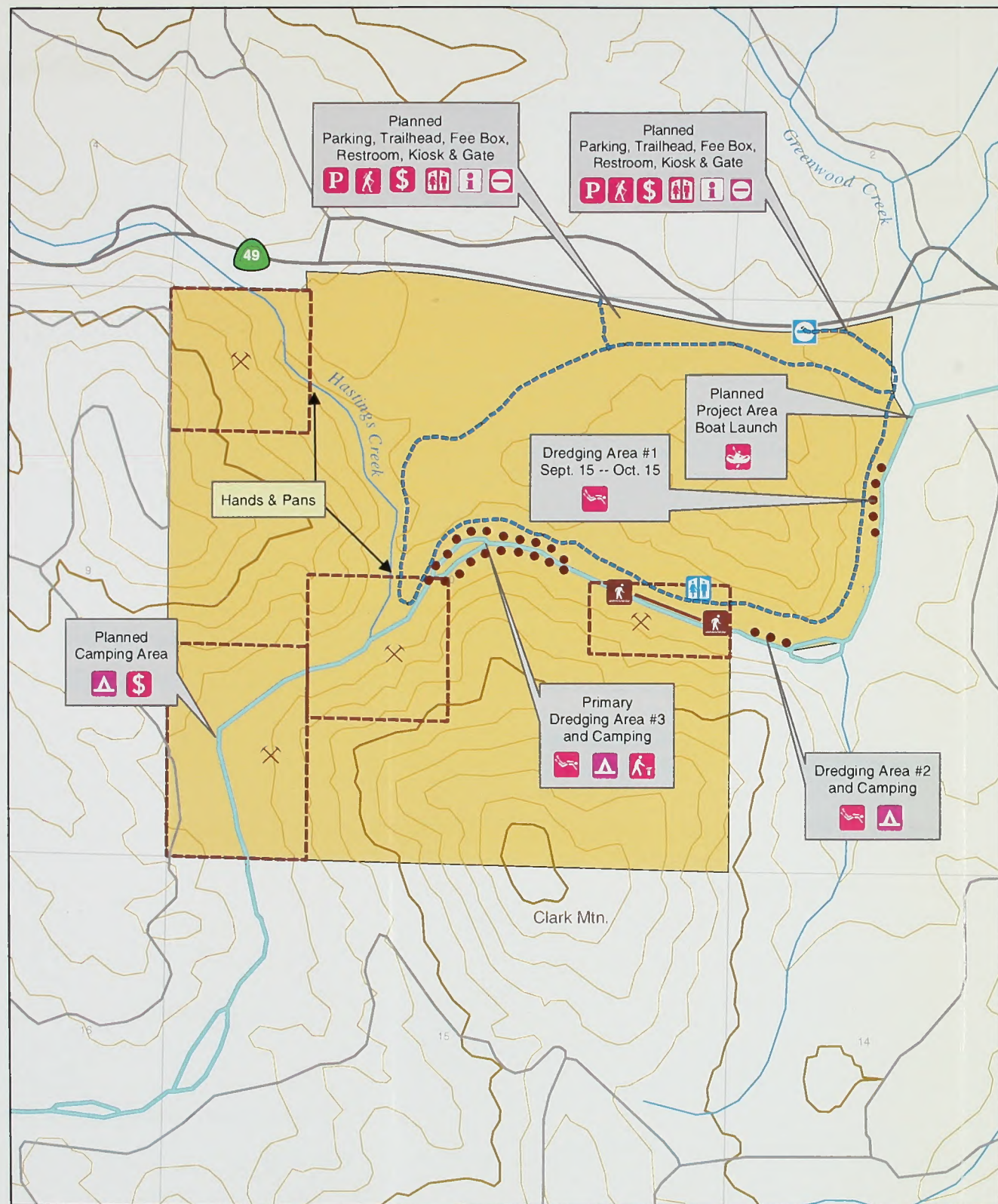
South Fork of the American River

Dave Moore Nature Area Unit

(Map 4)



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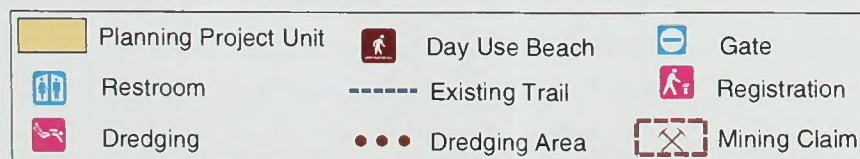
South Fork of the American River **Greenwood Creek Unit**

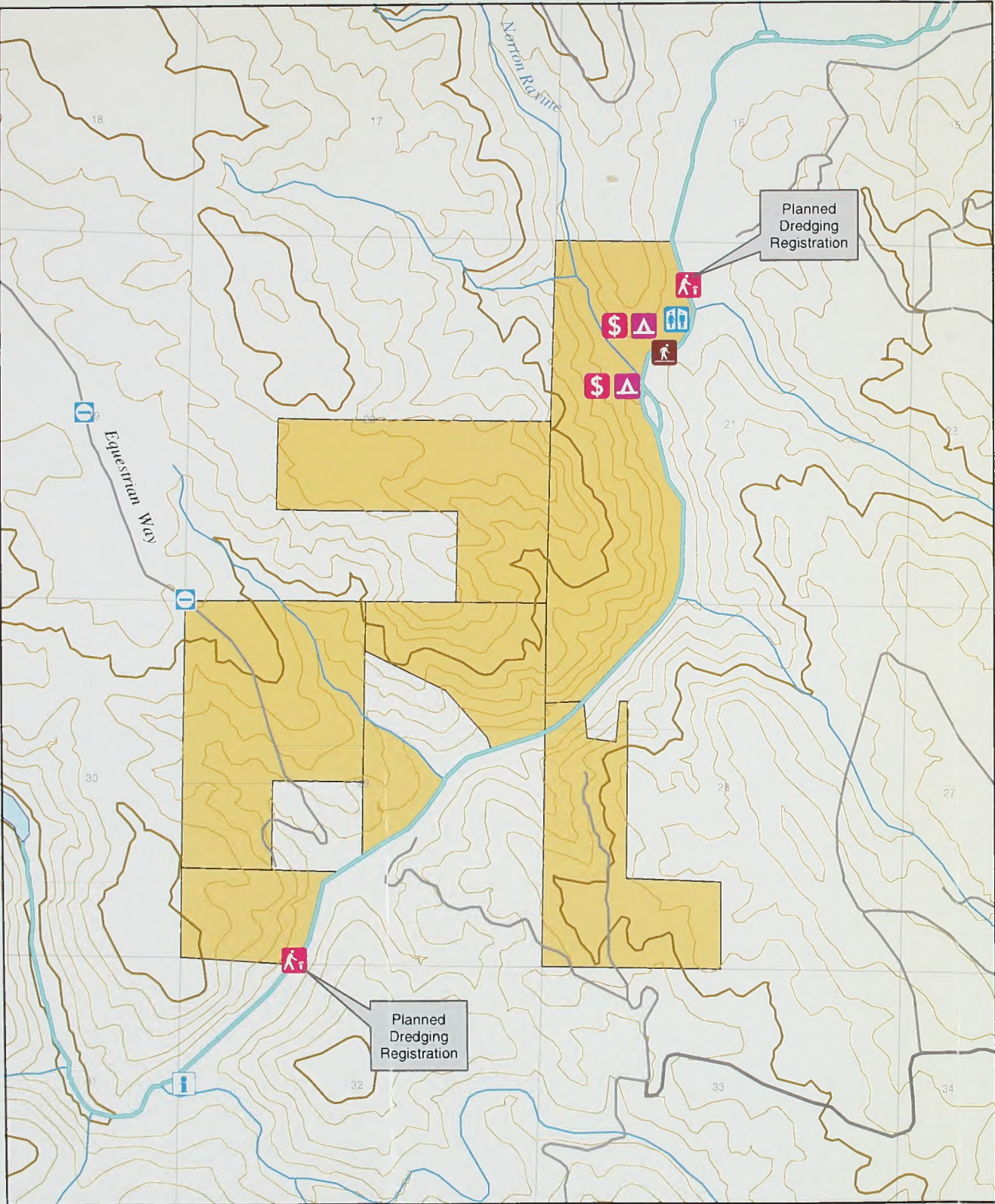
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









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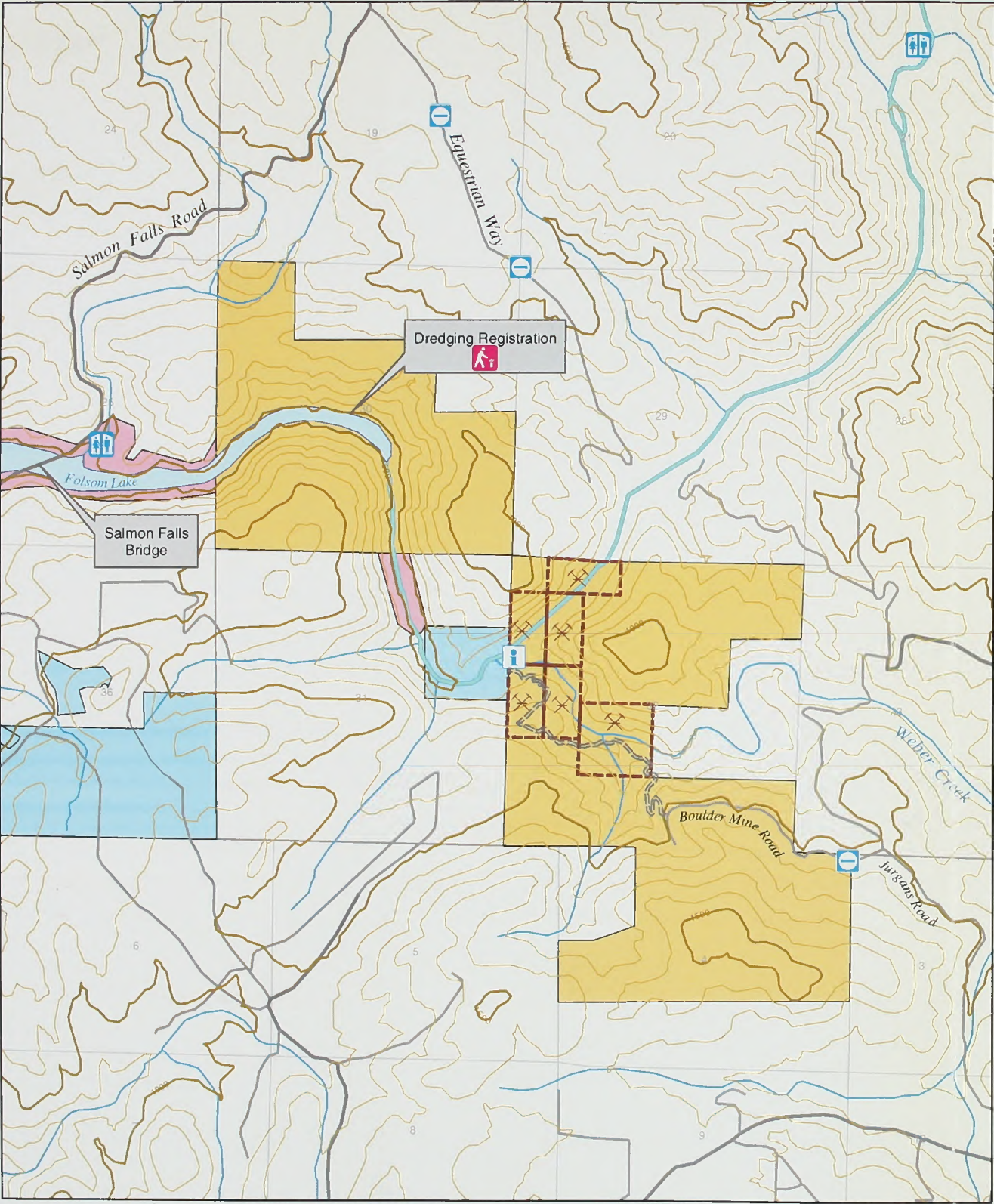


- | | |
|---|---|
|  Planning Project Unit |  Day Use Beach |
|  Gate |  Campsite |
|  Sign |  Registration |
|  Restroom |  Fee Box |

South Fork of the American River
Norton Ravine Unit
(Map 6)



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South Fork of the American River
Pine Hill Unit
(Map 7)



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The Bureau of Land Management

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is an agency within the United States Department of the Interior, the nation's principal conservation agency. The BLM manages 272 million acres of public lands and resources in 12 western states, including Alaska, to serve the needs of the American people. Resources are managed under the principles of multiple use and sustainable yield, taking into account the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and non-renewable resources, fish and wildlife, wilderness and scenic, scientific and cultural values. It is the policy of the BLM to establish partnerships to foster cooperation, discover new ideas and management opportunities and to more effectively manage the public lands.

The Folsom Resource Area office of the Bureau of Land Management is directly responsible for managing approximately 230,000 acres of Federal public land, scattered throughout California's historical Mother Lode country from Nevada County in the north to Mariposa County in the south. These lands, the remnants of the old public domain, are designated mostly as multiple-use lands, which means that they are managed for several purposes, including forestry, mining, grazing, outdoor recreation, wildlife, cultural resources, watershed values, and similar items.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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